

THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES

OF

DICK CLINTON



THE MASKED HIGHWAYMAN



ELEGANTLY ILLUSTRATED.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NAT BLAKE," "NED SCARLET," ETC. ETC.

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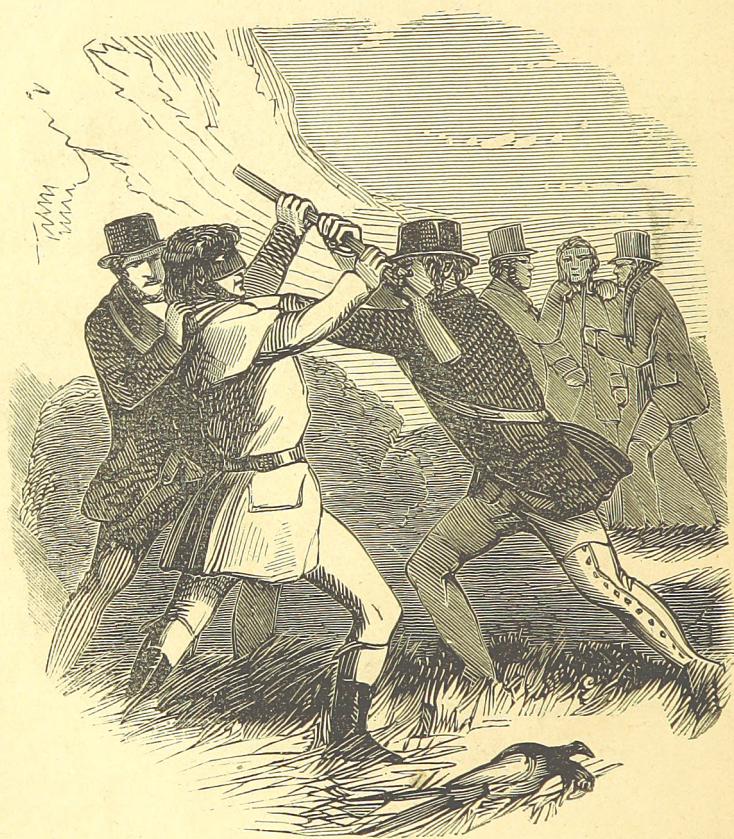
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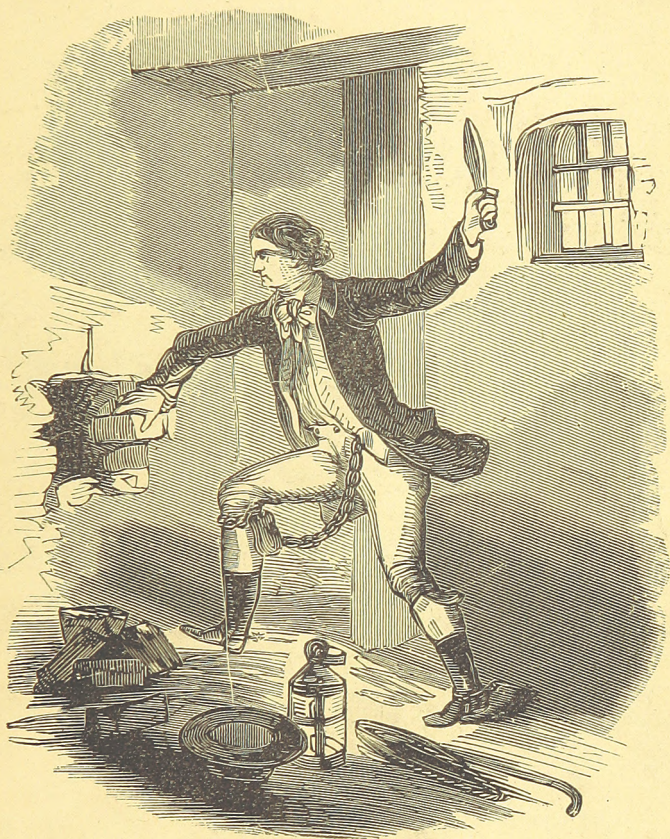
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DICK CLINTON:

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CHAPTER I.

THE ARREST AND THE ALIBI.

It was at the close of a busy market day in the town of Croydon, and a number of farmers, graziers, butchers, and others, were assembled in the spug parlor of the 'King's Head,' some discussing the probability of a rise in the price of wheat, others the relative merits of long and short-horned oxen, and a few so well satisfied with the business of the day, that they smoked their pipes and quaffed their ale in silence, as if they wished to abstract their minds from the cares of life. A cheerful fire burned upon the hearth, roaring and crackling as it blazed up the wide chimney, and heightening by its ruddy glare, the color which glared upon the broad, round faces of many of the farmers who sat around it. It was the month of November, and as candles had not been brought into the room, the twilight which had already set in, was only relieved by the cheerful log fire, which diffused an agreeable warmth throughout the apartment.

'Did you see the large bills posted up in the market-place, neighbor Owen?' asked an old man who brought pigs to the market, turning to a farmer who sat near him, after a pause of several minutes in the conversation.

'Why, I did see 'em, Master Morgan,' returned the farmer, 'but I did not stop to read 'em. What are they about?—sheep stolen, or a horse, or summut?'

'No, a reward of a hundred pounds for the apprehension of the highwayman as robbed the grazier on Salisbury Plain,

and stopped the Salisbury coach, and plundered the passengers,' replied Morgan.

'I ain't heard a word about it, and I never read the papers,' observed Farmer Owen.

'The robbery of the grazier occurred a month ago. I think,' remarked a butcher in the company.

'Yes,' said Morgan, 'and the robbery of the Salisbury coach occurred only a week ago, but they were both the work of one man, a tall, powerful fellow, who rides a black horse, and wears a black mask over his face to conceal his features.

While he was speaking a man entered the parlor, who seemed to be a stranger to every one present; he was of moderate stature, but broad-shouldered and massively framed, and impressed the spectator with the idea that he was possessed of unusual muscular power. He wore a rough drab great coat, buttoned up to his chin, a broad-brimmed, low-crowned hat, and a large blue silk handkerchief tied round his bull-like neck; under one arm he carried a short knotty stick, and a surly-looking white bull-dog, whose head, neck, and fore limbs bore the scars of many a by-gone conflict, followed close at his heels.—Being a stranger, every eye was turned upon him as he entered, but after throwing a keen, rapid, and scrutinising glance round the apartment, he sat down between the door and the blazing fire without speaking, and rapped upon the floor with his cudgel.

'Coming,' cried the landlord, from the bar; and in a moment he bustled into

the parlor, with a white apron before him. 'What is it to be, sir?' said he, surveying his stranger guest by the red and flickering light of the fire.

'Bring a light, landlord,' said the stranger, gruffly. 'It is as dark here as the devil's tail. And let me have a stiff glass of warm brandy and water, and a screw.'

'Brandy and water, warm, sir?—yes, sir,' responded the landlord, a little podgy fellow, with a red face and a bald head; and giving the stranger a paper of tobacco from a pocket in his white apron, he collected the empty pewter measures and glasses, and quitted the room.

'I must be starting,' observed a young farmer who had been sitting in an obscure corner of the room, as the landlord went out, and rising from his chair, he began folding a large handkerchief round his throat; after which, he buttoned up his great coat.

The landlord presently returned with the stranger's brandy and water, half of which the latter swallowed at a gulp, and then he lighted a couple of candles, and placed them upon the table. The moment the light enabled him to distinguish the countenances of those present, the stranger with the white bull-dog fixed his eyes with a penetrating glance upon the young farmer who was preparing to leave; and the latter, as if conscious that he was the object of the stranger's keen scrutiny, pulled his hat over his eyes, and advanced towards the door. The stranger sprang to his feet at this movement, and grasping his knotty cudgel in his right hand, he placed his massive form before the door; while the dog, who had been lying near the fire, jumped up and watched his master's motions with as much intelligence in his seamed face as it is possible for the canine race to exhibit.

'You are my prisoner! Surrender in the king's name!' exclaimed the stranger, as he grasped the collar of the young farmer's great coat with his left hand.

'What do you mean?' demanded the farmer, sternly, after a moment's pause, during which he stood passively in the grasp of his detainer, as if overwhelmed with amazement or confusion.

'Oh, you know what I mean,' returned the other. 'It is no use to try the innocent dodge upon me, and so you had better come along quietly; you will get nuffin by being obstupulous, 'cept the darbies on your mauleys.'

'Who are you? and what do you

suppose me to be?' demanded the young farmer, while the rest of the company looked on with the most intense curiosity and surprise.

'Oh, it's a case of mistaken 'dentity, ain't it?' returned the stranger, with an ironical grin. 'Vy I am a hoffer from London, my sucking-dove, and I have a varrant in my pocket to apprehend the high toby cove as robbed the Salisbury coach last week. So come along, and bless your stars that you havn't far to travel on such a dark uncomfortable night to the country goal.'

'I do not understand all this,' persisted the young farmer, upon whose collar the officer still maintained a firm grasp. 'You don't suppose that I am the man who committed the robberies in Wiltshire?'

'How werry innocent he is, ain't he?' said the officer, grinning ironically. 'Jist like the rest of these coves—they are all hinjured innocence.'

'This is a very good joke, I dare say,' observed the young farmer, coloring visibly, and speaking in a tone of impatience; 'but I want to be getting towards home, so I would thank you to remove your hand from my shoulder.—Why, there are a dozen men in this room who know me, and can prove that I have not been absent from the neighborhood for a single night for the last six months.'

The officer seemed startled by this bold assertion, and the confident tone in which it was spoken, and he glanced half-credulously round the room.

'I know the young man,' said Farmer Owen, who seemed staggered by the charge so stoutly persisted in by the officer. 'His name is Clinton, and his father is a neighbor of mine.'

'That may be,' returned the officer; 'but it is no answer to the charge of robbery; remember the Golden Farmer. Mr. Clinton answers so closely to the description of the masked highwayman who robbed the Salisbury coach, that it becomes my painful dooty to lodge him in the county prison; if he can prove an hallybey before the beaks to-morrow, so much the better for him.'

'Can I not be taken before a justice this evening?' said the young farmer. 'I shall be able, by the evidence of my friends here, to prove that the charge is totally unfounded, and it will save them and me much inconvenience.'

'Well, be it as you say, let us go before the justice at once,' said the officer, after a moment's hesitation.

'Come, then, Master Owen, and you too, Master Morgan,' said young Clinton, preparing to accompany the officer.—'You are aware how utterly unfounded is this charge that has been brought against me.'

'We are with you, Master Clinton,' said those whom he had addressed, rising with alacrity; and old Owen added, 'it would be sad news to carry home to your father to-night, that his son was a prisoner in Croydon goal, on a charge of highway robbery.'

The party then left the inn, the officer going first with his prisoner, who was reserved and thoughtful on the way to the residence of the magistrate, and Owen and Morgan closely followed them, with several farmers who knew Clinton, and respected him both on his own account and his father's.

The evening was dark, and a mizzling rain was falling, which hung upon the clothes of the passengers like a mist, and rendered the pavement of the street unpleasantly wet and sloppy.—The magistrate's house, however, was not more than ten minutes walk from the King's Head, and after waiting half an hour for his worship to conclude his dinner, that functionary, with his clerk, entered the room.

'Well, officer, what is the charge? highway robbery, eh?' said the magistrate, after glancing several times from Clinton to the officer, as if he were uncertain which was the prisoner, and which his captor.

'Your worship,' began the officer, ducking his head to the mayor, and advancing a step or two before his prisoner, 'I apprehended this prisoner at the King's Head, on a warrant signed by the mayor of Salisbury, and if your worship will be so good as to cast your eye over the dockyment, and this here bill of the reward, you will see that there can't be possibly any mistake about the matter.'

With these words, he handed to the magistrate the warrant for the prisoner's apprehension, and the printed bill wherein he was described, and a reward of one hundred pounds offered for his capture. The magistrate merely cast his eye over the warrant, but while perusing the bill—copies of which had been that afternoon posted in the market-place—he several times glanced from the paper to the prisoner, as if comparing his personal appearance with the printed description.

It should be observed that the highwayman's name was not mentioned in

the placard, which merely described him as about twenty-five years of age, five feet, ten inches in height, fair complexion, light hair, blue eyes, and aquiline nose; and usually dressed in a drab over-coat and top boots.

'Does the prisoner deny his identity?' inquired the magistrate.

'I do, your worship,' returned Clinton, in a firm but perfectly respectful tone.

'What is your name, prisoner?' demanded the magistrate.

'My name is Clinton, and my father is a reputable farmer at Cheam, your worship,' replied Clinton; 'I have friends here who can testify that I have not been absent from home one night during the last six months, and therefore that the charge of highway robbery in Wiltshire is completely without foundation.'

'Why, the name on the warrant is Clinton!' exclaimed the magistrate, looking keenly at the young farmer, who started at the mention of his name as if he had inadvertently trodden upon a snake.

For a moment he seemed overpowered at the information revealed by the magistrate, and stood as if rooted to the spot by confusion and surprise; the warm blood rushed to his countenance, suffusing it with crimson even to the roots of his light brown hair, and then sped back to his heart, leaving on his cheeks a deadly pallor.

'There is some mistake here, your worship,' he faltered, as soon as he had recovered from the confusion into which he had been thrown by the revelation made by the magistrate of the highwayman's name. 'Though by a remarkable coincidence, my name and personal appearance are the same as those of the robber whom I have been mistaken for, the fact that I have not been twenty-four hours together absent from Cheam, for the last six or seven months, must sufficiently prove that I could not possibly have committed these robberies in Wiltshire.'

'Is there any one here who knows the prisoner, and can testify to the truth of his statement?' inquired the magistrate, who seemed perplexed by the prisoner's confident assertions on one hand, and the coincidence of names and descriptions, and the evident confusion of Clinton when the highwayman's name was mentioned, on the other.

'That can I, your worship,' responded farmer Owen, pushing forward to the table at which the magistrate and his

clerk were seated, and the oath having been administered to him, he deposed that he had known the prisoner and his father between five and six years, which was the whole period they had lived at Cheam. Old Mr. Clinton, he said, 'owns a freehold farm of about a hundred acres, and his son lives with him. My own farm adjoins Master Clinton's and I have seen the young man every day for some weeks past, working with the men at ploughing and sowing wheat.'

'Did you see him last Monday?' said the magistrate, the day mentioned being that which preceded the evening on which the Salisbury coach had been stopped, and the passengers plundered by a single masked highwayman, no rare occurrence at the period of which we are writing, the date of our tale being seventy years ago.

'I did, your worship,' replied Owen, after an instant's reflection. 'I saw him with a gun in a field adjoining my own farm, and we talked together about ten minutes.'

'This is most extraordinary,' observed the magistrate; then bending his head down, he said to his clerk, in a low voice, 'what do you think of this business, Mr. Driver?'

'A mere accidental coincidence, sir,' replied the clerk; 'Clinton and Owen are both freeholders, and reputable farmers at Cheam; and Owen's evidence being credible, the *alibi* is clearly established.'

'Then the prisoner must be discharged?' observed the magistrate.

'Decidedly so, in my opinion, sir,' returned Mr. Driver. 'If Owen has deposed falsely, he can be indicted for perjury; and really I do not think it would be prudent to remand the prisoner, and put the county to the expense of bringing witnesses from Salisbury.'

'This appears to be a remarkable case of mistaken identity,' said the magistrate, addressing the officer. 'The extraordinary resemblance between the highwayman and Mr. Clinton removes from you any imputation of carelessness in preferring the charge, and the evidence of Mr. Owen having completely exonerated the prisoner, he stands discharged from custody. Mr. Clinton, I am happy to inform you that your innocence of this charge has been proved to my entire satisfaction, and so make this public declaration that you leave this room without the slightest stain upon your character.'

Clinton bowed, and immediately with-

drew, followed by the friends who had accompanied him to the magistrate's residence. His manner was strange and reserved, and he more than once answered in an abstracted manner as they walked towards the 'King's Head'; he declined the invitation of his friends to join them in a bowl of punch, and calling for his horse, mounted immediately, and set off at a rapid pace in the direction which led to the village of Cheam. The accusation of which he had been the object, formed the theme of conversation in the tavern parlor after his departure; and among those who knew him less than farmer Owen, comments were made upon the strangeness of the young farmer's behavior during and after the investigation.

In the meantime Clinton reached his father's homestead at Cheam, and having put his black mare in the stable, he entered the house.

The servant girl who admitted him, observing his moody brow and abstracted manner, was tempted by the demon curiosity, to linger at the door of the apartment in which old Clinton was smoking his pipe, awaiting the return of his son from Croydon, to hear the news, and the price of wheat; and contrived to overhear enough to still further excite her curiosity, and whet her desire to hear more.

The first words of her young master, were spoken in a low voice, and she could not catch their purport.

'Discovered!' exclaimed the old farmer, in a tone of mingled anguish and surprise; and then he made some observation which the girl did not hear.

'The name is on the warrant, and the fullest description is given in the bills offering the reward,' returned his son.

'Unhappy youth!' ejaculated the old man, 'who would have thought it would ever come to this?'

'Suppose I were to leave home for a time?' said young Clinton, after a pause of some minutes, during which the grief of the old farmer vented itself in audible sobs; and then the young man spoke for several minutes in a tone too low for the girl to overhear, but he appeared to be making some proposition, from which his father dissented.

'No, no, Ted,' said he, 'you have fortunately succeeded in removing suspicion from yourself, and I cannot consent to any scheme of that sort.'

So long a pause followed the last remark of the old farmer, that the girl thought the subject dropped, and steal-

ing from the door, she returned to the kitchen to cogitate upon what she had heard.

CHAPTER II.

MYSTERY AND LOVE.

On the following evening several men were seated in the tap-room of the Red Lion, at Cheam, smoking their pipes over mugs of bright and foaming ale.— They were mostly laborers on the farms of Clinton and Owen, and wore clean smock-frocks and corduroy or leather breeches, with leather gaiters over their blue worsted stockings. The circumstance of its being Saturday night, had caused them to drop in to take a mug of ale and smoke a pipe together, before returning to their respective homes, the cottages which composed the village of Cheam, being situated widely apart, though it is of small extent compared with those villages in the neighborhood the population of which are more engaged in manufactures than in agricultural pursuits.

‘I thought you would be gone, before I got here to have a glass of ale with you,’ observed the man who had entered last, as he placed his flag-basket under the settee, and sat down near the cheerful fire.

‘Well, so I should, as I have further to go than most of you,’ returned the man whom he addressed, who was one of Farmer Clinton’s ploughmen, ‘but the old man could not pay me for want of sufficient silver, and he promised that Edwin, who has gone to Mitcham, would be passing here after his return.’

‘That was a rum start at Croydon yesterday,’ observed the other.

‘Yes,’ rejoined the ploughman. ‘It was quite clear, though, that our young master couldn’t have been the robber in the black mask.’

‘So I suppose,’ said the other rustic, ‘but if so be the highwayman wore a black mask when he committed the robberies, how do they know he is young and fair complexioned, and has blue eyes?’

‘That is just what I asked Master Morgan, the pig-jobber,’ returned the ploughman. ‘It was him that told me all about it, but he was as much puzzled on that head as I was.’

‘I will tell you how that transpired,’ said the village blacksmith, removing

his pipe from his mouth to speak with more freedom. ‘I was in Jemmy Caxon’s barber-shop, at Carshalton, to get shaved this morning, and he began talking about young Clinton and the Wiltshire robberies. ‘How did they find out the highwayman’s name? and how come they to have his description so pat, when he wears a black mask, and the night’s are dark?’ says I. ‘I’ll tell you,’ says he; ‘the London runner was in the Black Lion parlor, at Croydon, when I went in there last night, and I got into conversation with him to hear all I could about young Clinton. Two or three nights after the robbery of the Salisbury coach, it appears that the same highwayman stopped a gentleman from London, who thought he had heard the robber’s voice before, and called him by his name; upon which he turned his horse’s head, and galloped away. This strange behavior confirmed the gentleman’s suspicion, and on returning to London he communicated his information to the proper quarter; he stated that he had several times met a person corresponding to the appearance of the highwayman at a gambling-house in London, and that if the highwayman was the man he supposed him to be, he was about twenty-five years of age, five feet ten inches in height, and fair complexioned, with blue eyes and light hair.— Upon this information the reward bills were got out immediately; and it was not until afterwards that the researches of the Bow Street runners, resulted in the discovery that the individual in question was named Clinton, and that he represented himself as the son of a very wealthy farmer in Surrey.’ That is the history of the whole affair, just as I heard it from Jemmy Caxon’s own lips.

‘I cannot help thinking that young Clinton behaved very strange, according to what my master told me this morning,’ observed an old man who was shepherd to one of the farmers who had been at the ‘King’s Head,’ at Croydon, the preceding evening.

‘Hush! here he is,’ said the ploughman, in a subdued tone.

‘You all seem to be enjoying yourselves pretty well,’ observed the young man who entered at that moment, after pausing an instant on the threshold.

‘Yes, master,’ returned one of the rustics, ‘and as we don’t catch you very often at the alehouse, what are you going to stand?’

‘Why, as you do not catch me very often at the alehouse, as you say,’ said

the young man, with a strange kind of smile, I shall not object to treating you with a gallon of ale. Landlord!' said he, calling towards the bar, 'bring a gallon of ale for these honest fellows.'

As he thus spoke he sat down, and one of the men whispered to another that he thought his young master must have been drinking, as he had never been so liberal before, and never sat down in their company except at their annual bean-feast, and 'the harvest-home' supper. The ale was brought in by the landlord, and the donor poured out a glass for himself, and lighting a pipe, was soon enveloped in a cloud of his own raising. The ploughman was somewhat surprised at not receiving his wages, but as he thought that the young man would not remain long in their company, he resolved to say nothing until he prepared to depart without paying him. Clinton drank his ale, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and, at the end of a quarter of an hour, without making the slightest allusion to the ploughman's wages, was about to leave.

'Did your father say anything about paying me, Mr. Clinton?' said the man.

'Has he not paid you himself?' inquired Clinton.

'No, he had not change sufficient,' replied the ploughman. 'He paid the others, and said as how you should bring mine here to me when you came back from Mitcham.'

'He said nothing to me about it,' said Clinton, and then he added, after a moment's reflection, 'I have not the money now, but I shall receive some up the village, and I will look in as I come back.'

'Thank'ee, Mr. Clinton,' said the ploughman; and the young man quitted the tap-room, and passing the bar, he quickly disappeared in the darkness, which the feeble light of the lamp over the door of the alehouse only illumed for a few yards around.

Some remarks were made by the men upon the singularity of young Clinton's visiting the alehouse for no other purpose than smoking a pipe in their company by the tap-room fire, and treating them with a gallon of ale; but they were suddenly cut short, at the expiration of ten minutes, by the young farmer's entrance.

'You are soon back, sir,' observed the ploughman.

'Soon, Giles,' said Clinton, with some surprise.

'I ought to have been home an hour ago, but I was unexpectedly detained at

Mitcham; otherwise you would not have had to wait for your money.'

As he spoke, he took a half-guinea and several shillings from his pocket, and laid them on the table before the ploughman.

'I did not mean from Mitcham,' returned Giles, as he picked up the money and transferred it to a small leathern bag—'I meant you had not long been up the village.'

'I do not understand you, Giles,' exclaimed Edwin Clinton, looking at the ploughman with an air of surprise. 'I have not been up the village, but came direct here immediately I reached home.'

The rustics looked at each other with surprise and incredulity legibly expressed in their countenances, and for a moment there was a pause of profound silence.

'Then it was your fetch which was here just now!' exclaimed Giles, opening his eyes to their utmost extent, as soon as he could recover from his surprise sufficiently to speak.

Clinton now seemed as much bewildered as the assembled rustics, and he fixed his eyes upon the countenance of Giles as if to discover whether he was joking, or under the influence of liquor; but the serious expression of the ploughman's features denied both of these suppositions.

'You must be mistaken,' said he, at length. 'I tell you, again, that I have only just returned from Mitcham, and have come straight here from the farm.'

'Why, Master Clinton,' said the old shepherd, in a deprecating tone, 'we all saw you, and the gallon of ale which you treated us with is not all drank yet; we can't all be mistaken, or all liars.'

Edwin Clinton glanced hastily from the countenance of one to that of another, until his eyes had passed round the table, and seeing the same expression upon each, a pang of the heart seemed to agitate his countenance, and he abruptly quitted the room.

Leaving Giles and his fellow-labourers in earnest confabulation at the village ale-house, we must now introduce the reader to the fire-side of Farmer Owen, by which he and his wife and daughter were seated. A cheerful log fire was blazing and crackling on the hearth, and by the sides of the wide chimney a side of bacon and a couple of hams were suspended. Over the mantle hung the farmer's double-barrelled gun, and a rough lurcher lay curled up

at his feet, while a large black cat basked before the fire on the other side of the rug. Old Owen sat in the spacious chimney corner smoking his pipe, and at intervals applying his lips to a brown jug which stood convenient to his hand; and his wife, a little thrifty woman, and a pattern of neatness and industry, was plying her knitting-needles by the light of a candle which stood in a polished brass candle-stick upon a walnut-wood table which shone like a mirror.

The farmer's daughter was about twenty years of age, and, like her mother, of low stature and *pétite* figure; but on her countenance and admirably-moulded form, sat a thousand charms and graces which time, the remorseless reaper, had gathered as he flew from those of her parent. Her dark brown hair was parted smoothly over her white and polished forehead, and arranged in simple bands upon her temples, and contrasted in a pleasing manner with the delicate purity of her complexion, which was clear and colourless as the purest alabaster, save where the faintest tinge of rose tinted her soft and damask cheeks, as if to mark her as a child of earth, lest the admiring beholder should be tempted by her exceeding beauty to worship her as a seraph from the skies.

The maiden raised her head from her work as the sound of a horse's feet cantering past the farm met her ears, but as the sounds passed away, and in a few minutes ceased entirely, she sighed gently, and resumed her work.

'Edwin will not come to-night, Fanny,' said old Owen, with an arch look at his daughter, which slightly heightened the color upon her damask cheeks. 'He has gone over to Mitcham, and as he has been working hard all day, he will be tired when he returns; so you need not expect him, lass.'

Fanny Owen made no observation, but it was evident that her father's words caused her to feel a considerable degree of disappointment. In a few minutes, however, her countenance brightened again as she heard quick footsteps approaching the farm-house, and she again paused from her work, and listened with keen anxiety to the sounds.

'They be the lad's footsteps, I do think,' observed the father, listening as his ears caught the sound.

Love sharpens the ears, however, as well as the eyes, and those of Fanny Owen were already assured that the approaching footsteps were those of Edwin Clinton. Laying down her work, and

rising quickly from her seat, as the footsteps ceased at the door, she hastened to open it, and the young farmer entered.

'I have just been telling Fanny you would not come to-night, Edwin,' said old Owen, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, 'but I be mean glad to see you, lad; draw over a chair and warm your shins.'

'I have been over to Micham, and have not long returned,' observed Clinton, taking the chair which Fanny placed for him between her father and herself, but though he spoke in his usual cheerful tone, the young girl thought she perceived in his looks and manner an ill-concealed dejection and mental abstraction for which she was at a loss to account.

This impression was confirmed by the young farmer's behaviour during the rest of the evening; several times he fell into a reverie, from which he was only aroused by a question twice put, and then he would press his hand upon his brow, apologise for his inattention, and even then require to be informed again of the import of the question. None are so observant as those who love are of the behaviour of the loved one, and Fanny Owen saw the depression which hung upon her lover's spirits with anxiety and tender solicitude. Clinton seemed sensible that he was behaving strangely, and he took his leave of the worthy farmer and his wife at an earlier hour than he was wont to quit the hospitable fireside.

'Tell me, Edwin, what it is that weighs so heavily upon your spirits, for that something has happened to depress them I am certain,' said Fanny, as she accompanied her lover to the front door, which opened into a passage, so that their conversation could not be overheard by her parents.

'I cannot tell you dear Fanny,' replied Edwin Clinton. 'You are right, though—something has happened to depress me, and I am afraid your parents must have observed the strangeness of my manners this evening.'

'I saw it the moment you entered,' observed Fanny, taking her lover's hand, and speaking in a tone of tender solicitude. 'Why will you not confide its cause to me?—has your love grown less, or have I become less worthy of your confidence?'

'You wrong me, Fanny, by those cruel suspicions,' returned Clinton.—'What cause have I given you to doubt my oft-repeated protestations of regard?'

'Forgive me, Edwin,' exclaimed Fanny, the tears starting to her eyes. 'I was wrong to doubt your love for me, but why withhold from your Fanny the cause of this deep dejection and strange abstraction?'

'They are secrets so terrible, dear Fanny,' said Clinton, in a solemn tone, and holding both hands of the lovely maiden in his own, 'that they must not be breathed to a living soul, lest the leaves should whisper them to the passing traveller, or the birds of the air bear them afar to strange ears. Of this nature is that which now weighs upon my soul, and which has made my behaviour this evening so strange as to attract your notice. Believe me, dear Fanny, it would relieve my heart of much of the load of anguish and torturing doubt, and bewildering suspicion, which now gnaws it, could I reveal to you its cause; but I dare not! Oh, no! its revelation would chill your blood as if an ice-bolt had shot through your heart—it would plant in your bosom thorns which would lacerate it for ever!'

'You make me shudder, Edwin!' exclaimed Fanny with visible emotion.—'But if this secret be so terrible, and it would relieve your heart to share with me its knowledge and the consequences, hesitate not to reveal it to me, that I may be able to afford you that comfort in your affliction which I cannot do while I remain in ignorance of its cause.'

'I dare not, Fanny!' returned young Clinton, bending a look of earnest and deep affection upon the upturned countenance of the lovely girl whose hands he pressed almost convulsively between his own. 'Not for worlds would I wring your gentle heart by revealing that tremendous secret which harrows up my own. 'No, my beloved girl! rest in happy ignorance of the cause of my unhappiness, the knowledge of which would only embitter your own existence.'

'Tell me at least whether it has any connection with the unfounded charge of which you were the object last night?' said Fanny in an earnest tone, as she looked anxiously into the troubled countenance of her lover.

'Indistinctly it has, dear Fanny,' replied Edwin, after a pause which seemed to the blue-eyed maiden painfully prolonged. 'But I trust I need not declare to you how utterly unfounded those charges were?' he added, looking keenly into her countenance; but his searching glance read nothing there but the most fervent and devoted love, pure as that of

the angels, and exalted as the heart of woman can render an earthly passion.

'Oh no, dear Edwin!' exclaimed the lovely girl, pressing his hands in her own, and looking up into his countenance with an expression of unutterable affection upon her own, rich in that beauty which is the reflection of the moral loveliness within; 'Had the evidence of your innocence not been so conclusive, my heart would still have refused to believe you guilty, and though all the world beside had pronounced you so, before that tribunal my Edwin would have stood acquitted.'

'Yours is a true woman's heart, my own Fanny,' said Edwin Clinton, drawing her to his perturbed breast, and imprinting a kiss upon her fair brow, where sat innocence enthroned in intellectual beauty. 'But the unfounded charge made against me at Croydon, is not the direct cause of my unhappiness; my innocence was so easily proved that it could not affect me a moment, but it arose out of the real cause, and indicated its existence to my anguished heart, as plainly as the crimson evidences of murder point to the perpetration of a fearful crime.'

'Your words are strange and full of mystery, Edwin, and yet they speak but too plainly of something dreadful,' observed Fanny, and the young farmer felt her frame shudder as he pressed her unresistingly to his heart.

'Let them not weigh upon your heart, dear Fanny,' returned Edwin Clinton, again kissing her. 'Perhaps in a few days the cause of my unhappiness may so far have passed away as to enable me to shroud it in my own heart from the observation of the world. In that case question me not, but endeavor to forget what I have said to-night. Now let us part, dear girl; I know you feel cold and your parents will wonder at your prolonged absence from the fire-side.—Farewell, dear Fanny.'

'Farewell, then, dear Edwin. May your true heart be lightened of its grief,' murmured the lovely girl, receiving a fervent kiss upon her moist red lips, and gently returning the thrilling pressure.

Then she opened the door, for during this conversation they had stood in the dark passage, and pressing the maiden's small white hand within his own, the young farmer stepped into the darkness which reigned without, and was almost immediately out of sight. In a few minutes the sound of his retiring footsteps were no longer heard, and closing

the door, the young maiden returned to the fire-side.

CHAPTER III.

BANSTEAD DOWNS.

FRANK GILES, the ploughman, left the ale-house a full hour later that night than was usual with him, for the strangeness of Clinton's behavior had been a faithful theme of discourse among the rustics assembled in the tap-room of the 'Red Lion,' and it occupied Giles's thoughts, to the complete exclusion of every other topic, as he trudged homeward.

While he was yet thinking the matter over in his mind, and before he reached his own cottage, he heard the clattering of horse's feet behind him, and he drew up on one side of the road in order to allow the traveller to pass. A woman with a lantern was approaching in an opposite direction at the same time, and as the horseman came up the lantern gleamed full upon his countenance and revealed to the astonished Giles the features of Edwin Clinton. Completely bewildered, Giles hastened to his cottage, while Edwin Clinton cantered towards Croydon.

On gaining the summit of Banstead Downs, Clinton reined his coal-black steed, and looked around him as if he expected to meet some one. Not a light gleamed from the window of any cottage or farm house, and not a star shone in the sky. At length his ears caught the sound of a horse's hoofs galloping over the turf of the Downs. He immediately drew from the side pocket of his drab over-coat a pair of large pistols, and having examined the priming of the flints as if to assure himself that they were ready for instant service, he returned them to his pockets. He then removed his hat, and taking out a black mask, he placed it securely over his countenance, and trotted down the sloping side of the dusky Downs to meet the approaching traveller.

The latter was a young man wrapped in an ample cloak of a dark color, and as far as he could be seen through the dense obscurity, his hair and complexion were dark, and his features remarkably handsome.

The direction in which he was pursuing his way over the Downs, led not to Cheam, but to the village of Banstead, and from Clinton's course, as well as

from the suspicious preparations which we have noticed, it was evidently his intention to intercept him.

'Stand and deliver!' cried Clinton, in a stern and even menacing tone, as he dashed at the traveller, and seized his bridle as he came up; he thrust the barrel of a pistol, which he suddenly drew from his pocket, within an inch of his countenance.

'What do you want?' demanded the traveller, whose voice trembled not, notwithstanding the imminence of the peril in which he suddenly found himself placed.

'Your money or your life!' replied Clinton, 'Hand over quickly what you have about you of the one, or I will not spare the other.'

'It should not have been so had we met on more equal terms,' said the traveller, and drawing forth a silken purse containing about a dozen guineas, he handed it to the highwayman. 'Now,' he added, as Clinton returned the pistol to his pocket, and loosed his hold of the bridle, 'if I presume to offer you a few words of advice, will you pledge me your word that my life shall not be endangered thereby?'

'I promise,' replied Clinton, who for a moment seemed surprised at the other's proposition.

'Then permit me to entreat most earnestly, for your worthy father's sake, for the sake of your innocent sister, for your own sake, that you will renounce at once, and forever the criminal course upon which you have embarked.'

'You know me, then?' observed Clinton.

'I do,' replied the other.

'As the Black Mask, or as young Clinton, of Cheam?' said the highwayman.

'I do not understand the question,' returned the traveller. 'You are Edwin Clinton, who was arrested last evening at Croydon, on a charge of highway robbery, and who was afterwards discharged!'

'I am,' replied the highwayman, after a pause.

'Then you have an answer for your ambiguous question,' observed the traveller. 'And now, having convinced you that I know you, let me again implore you to abandon this dangerous and criminal course of life, before its discovery brings your father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, and sheds a blight upon the heart of your innocent sister.'

'Your counsel is very well in its way,' returned Clinton in a tone that was husky with the emotion which he evidently was striving in vain to conceal under an air of reckless indifference, 'but what assurance have I that, knowing me, you will not betray me?'

'My word,' replied the young traveller, 'I took yours just now, and surely you may take mine.'

'I will trust you, Mr. Montgomery. I shall not remain in this neighborhood long, and perhaps may cross the Atlantic, and shape out a new course by myself on the shores of the Mississippi, or the St. Lawrence.'

'Why not remain at Cheam?' suggested Montgomery. 'Your secret is safe with me, and if poverty has been with you, the cause of crime, as I fear it often is, for your sister's sake,' he added, bending forward over his horse's mane, and lowering his voice, though they were alone upon the dusky heath. 'I will aid your return to honest courses by removing the cause of your departure from them.'

Clinton replied not for more than a minute, as if he were pondering upon Montgomery's generous offer, and the latter seemed to await his answer with the anxiety of a sincere friend.

'I cannot conscientiously say that poverty has led me into these courses,' said he, at length, 'and I will not abuse your generosity, Mr. Montgomery.'

Having uttered these words in a hesitating tone, Clinton turned his mare's head, and without saying another word, galloped across the Downs, towards Cheam. Montgomery sighed as he gazed after him, and then resumed his journey at a brisk pace in a direction which led from the common towards the secluded village of Banstead.

Midnight struck from the ivy-covered tower of the church as Montgomery rode through the village of Banstead; he stopped before a handsome iron-gate, close to which was a lodge in the Tudor style of architecture, and called 'Jones!' an old man immediately issued from the lodge with a lighted lantern, and having thrown open the gate, Montgomery cantered up a long, smoothly gravelled road, which ran for some distance through the shrubbery which belted his paternal domain, and then skirted an extensive lawn, dotted with cedars and exotic pines. Dismounting at the gate of the coach-yard, where a groom was waiting to receive his horse, the young man crossed the gardens, and sprang up the

steps leading to the front door. His hand was upon the knocker, when hearing a light, quick step in the hall, he desisted, and in another moment the chain was removed on the inside, the bolts were drawn back, and the door opened by a young female, who was a domestic in the establishment of the young man's father, Earnest Montgomery, esquire, one of his majesty's justices of the peace for the county of Surrey and an extensive land proprietor in that neighborhood.

The young female by whom Montgomery was admitted, was about twenty years, neither above nor below the ordinary height of woman, and rich in the attractions of her sex, both of countenance and figure. Her snowy neck was as gracefully arched as that of a swan, and her sloping shoulder and round white arms seemed those of a beautiful statue, sculptured by the chisel of a Praxiteles, and endued with life by the fiat of the Olympian Jove. Her charming bust was moulded of the most admirable proportions, and was displayed to the greatest advantage by the closely fitting dress of dark wollen, which exhibited the rounded outlines of her symmetrical form, while the high corsage and neat white collar forbade the immodest exposure of the bosom, so fashionable among ladies of rank and their imitators at a rather earlier period. Maturely developed, and firm and exuberant to a voluptuous degree, rose the plump and swelling bosom of the maiden beneath the bodice of maroon colored woolen; each semi-globe sufficiently distant from its fellow, to accord with the most refined and artistic principles of beauty, and yet not trenching in the least degree upon the contiguity of the arms. From beneath her cap, in which a certain degree of smartness was combined with sweetness and simplicity, her light brown hair rested in small glossy ringlets upon her fair cheeks, upon which sat the bloom and color of the ripened peach. Her eyebrows were lightly marked, the fair lashes long and silken, and her fine expressive eyes seemed to have borrowed the deep azure of an Italian sky in their clear hue, and the brightness of the sapphire in their lustrous splendor.

Such was the young maiden; and now that the light which she brings in her fair hand, enables us to perceive more distinctly the features of her young master, the moment is favorable for pre-

senting our readers with a sketch of his personal appearance.

Ernest Montgomery, the son and heir of Squire Montgomery, of the Coppice, as his ancestral mansion was designated, was about twenty-two years of age, and as he was the magistrate's only son, and the heir to great wealth and extensive possessions, he had not been brought up to any profession, though he had received the advantages of a classical education in Oxford University. He was about the middle height, well proportioned, though in his physical composition there was less of the Hercules than of the Antinous; his complexion was nearly as dark as that of a native of the south of Europe, and the form of his countenance a fine oval, which is considered by physiognomists as one of the indications of a refined and enlarged intellect.

'You are late, Mr. Earnest,' observed the young woman who had admitted him, carefully securing the door again, while Montgomery hung up his hat in the hall.

'I am later than I expected to be,' Rose, returned Earnest, 'and I was delayed upon the Downs, by an unpleasant, and indeed a very painful adventure.'

'Of what nature?' enquired Rose, raising her blue eyes to the young man's countenance with an air of tender concern, which she made no attempt to conceal.

'I have been robbed,' replied Ernest, 'and the robber—' he stopped abruptly in his communication, and appeared to hesitate whether he should proceed.

'Robbed!' echoed Rose in accents of alarm, 'I hope you are not hurt dear Ernest?' and she laid her hand upon his arm, and bent upon the young man's handsome and intelligent countenance a look of even deeper and more tender solicitude than before.

'Oh, no, I am not hurt, dear Rose,' replied Montgomery, impressing a kiss upon the now pale cheek of the lovely maiden, 'but you will be surprised and inexpressibly grieved when you learn who was the author of the outrage.'

'Good God!' ejaculated Rose, the pallor of her countenance now increasing to the ashy hue of death, and pressing her right hand upon her heart, she reeled as if suddenly struck with apoplexy, and would have fallen upon the hall floor, had not Ernest caught her in his arms.

'My dear girl' he exclaimed, some-

what alarmed at the effect of his words, for he feared that if the maiden's excitement produced an illness which should oblige him to summon assistance, he would be compelled, by the necessity of affording an explanation of the scene, to make a revelation which he wished to conceal.

Supporting the young girl upon his arm, therefore, he opened the door of the dining-room, and when he had placed her in a chair, she began to recover from the sudden shock which her feelings had received.

'I have a premonition of what you have to say, dear Ernest,' said he, in a low and gasping tone, 'but tell me all that has occurred—let me know the worst at once.'

'Can it be possible that you knew your brother to be engaged in such desperate and criminal courses, Rose?' inquired Ernest, in a tone of mingled sadness and surprise.

'I cannot answer you now, dear Ernest,' exclaimed Rose, who was still agitated by emotions terrible and profound. 'My brother is, and yet is not guilty, but you cannot understand this mystery, and I cannot tell you more.'

'Your brother is, and is not guilty?' said Ernest, fixing his eyes in astonishment and perplexity upon the maiden's pale and agitated countenance. 'What mystery is this, Rose?'

'Oh, do not ask me now, dear Ernest,' exclaimed Rose, clasping her hands, and raising her tearful eye to his countenance. 'In a short time, perhaps, I may be at liberty to explain that which seems dark and mysterious in my words, but do not, if you love me, Ernest, repaire from me that explanation now.'

'I know not what to surmise from your words, Rose,' said Ernest, passing his hand over his brow with a perplexed air, 'but I will tell you what has taken place, and I think you will then perceive that your brother's conduct is less equivocal than you appear to think. Last evening, or rather the evening before last, for it is now past midnight, your brother was arrested at Croydon, by an officer of justice from London, and charged with the commission of certain highway robberies in the neighborhood of Salisbury. The *alibi* having been proved on oath by his neighbour, Mr. Owen, to the satisfaction of the magistrates, he was discharged from custody, and the accusation then appeared to me, as doubtless it appeared

to all, completely without foundation.—It appeared the result of a remarkable coincidence between the personal appearance of your brother and that of the highwayman, combined with the discovery that the name of the latter was Clinton, and that he represented himself in London as the son of a Surrey farmer. But to-night I was met and robbed by your brother on the Downs; recognising him by his voice and personal appearance, though he wore a black mask, I implored him most earnestly, for his own sake, if not for the sake of those near and dear to him, to return to honest courses while it was in his power to retreat. He acknowledged himself to be Edwin Clinton, and I thought he seemed somewhat touched by my appeal.'

'His heart is not wholly closed to virtuous impulses and aspirations, then!' observed Rose, in a low, murmuring tone. 'Perhaps he might yet be saved, but who shall essay the task? who will attempt to rise up again the shattered temple of his soul?'

'I was surprised to hear him acknowledge that it was not poverty that had forced him upon courses so dangerous as well as criminal,' continued Montgomery, after a brief pause; 'for when, prompted by my love for you, I offered him the means, if poverty had been the means of his departure from honest courses, of freeing himself from its thralldom, he candidly avowed that poverty was not the cause, and declined my proffered aid. He spoke of leaving the country, and shaping out a new course of life for himself on the other side of the Atlantic.'

'I shall pray to God that he may abide in that mind,' exclaimed Rose, in a tone of fervour. 'In another land he might be weaned from vicious courses, and apply to honest and laudable purposes the energies now so terribly misdirected.'

'Yet he has hitherto borne a most exemplary character in the neighborhood, and is universally regarded as a model of industry and sobriety,' observed Earnest, thoughtfully. 'Your father, too, seems to be too worthy a man to be the parent of such a desperado as the masked robber of Salisbury Plain; and in fact, unless Owen was guilty of perjury, your brother could not have been the man who committed the robberies in Wiltshire; yet both bear the same name, the personal appearance of each exactly resembles that of the other, and both are

the sons of Surrey farmers. Such a perfect coincidence, I believe, was never before known; and the *alibi* proved by Owen being as satisfactory as the resemblance is marvelous, I know not what to think.'

'Much as appearances are against him, Earnest,' said Rose Clinton, in an earnest and almost solemn tone, 'he is not the criminal he seems. You shake your head, and I know that my words seem strangely at variance with what your own eyes and ears have seen and heard to-night. But this you may believe that farmer Owen is no perjurer, and that Edwin Clinton is not the man who committed the robberies in Wiltshire.'

'I am happy to receive that assurance from your lips, dear Rose,' returned Earnest, pressing her hand affectionately in his; and after a moment's reflection, he added, 'I can now understand your brother's question, whether I knew him as the masked highwayman of Salisbury Plain, or as Edwin Clinton, of Cheam: still that marvellous coincidence, joined to the occurrence of this night, haunts and bewilders me.'

A few moments afterwards, Rose Clinton lighted a candle for her master, received from him a kiss on her fair cheek, and both then sought their respective chambers.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WILLOWS FARM,—AND THE GIPSIE CAMP.

THE name of The Willows was given to the farm owned by the elder Clinton, on account of two weeping willows of great size which overhung a pond in front of the house. Five or six years before the period at which our narrative commences, the elder Clinton had come to Cheam with his son Edwin and daughter Rose Clinton, and purchased the Willows farm. Farmer Owen, who occupied the adjoining freehold, was the first acquaintance that old Clinton made, and to him he communicated the information that he came from a midland county where he had sold his farm immediately on the death of his wife.—Edwin Clinton was then twenty years of age, and Rose fifteen. The elder Clinton immediately on his taking possession of the Willows, engaged a house keeper to manage his domestic affairs,

and Rose, having expressed a wish to enter into domestic service in some respectable family, a situation was procured for her in the household of Squire Montgomery of the Coppice; there she had remained ever since, and the mutual attachment, which has been described in the last chapter as existing between her and young Montgomery was of two years standing at the date when our story opens.

Too honorable to take a base advantage of the warm and growing affection with which he had inspired her, Earnest Montgomery gave up to her his whole heart, and resolved to make her his wife as soon as he could take such a step with prudence, as he knew his parents were not likely to countenance what they would deem a degrading and unequal alliance.

A warm and reciprocal attachment had in the meantime sprang up between Edwin Clinton and the beautiful Fanny Owen, and marriage had already been talked of both by their parents and themselves.

Edwin Clinton and his father were universally respected in the neighborhood, and Farmer Owen and his wife looked forward with gladness to the day when they should see their only and beloved child the bride of a young man so industrious, steady, and likely to prosper as their neighbor's son. The attachment which existed between Rose Clinton and Earnest Montgomery, however, for reasons which must be obvious to the intelligent reader, remained a secret to all but themselves.

Having given this brief sketch of the position of the several members of the Clinton family at the period at which this veritable narrative commences, we will now resume it at the point at which we broke off at the end of the last chapter, the morning after the robbery of Earnest Montgomery, on Banstead Downs.

Old Clinton was standing at the door of his homestead, surveying the sky with a hesitating look, as if he were doubtful of the continuance of fair weather, and a ragged-headed lad was watering the team of horses at the pond, on the smooth surface of which a dozen ducks were paddling in quest of their insect food, quacking most inharmoniously all the time. The grunting of pigs, the hissing of geese, the gobbling of turkeys, the chucking and crowing of chickens, and the singular cry of the guinea fowl, completed the animal concert in the

farm-yard, which was answered from a distance by the bleating of sheep and the lowing of cows.

While old Clinton stood at the door of the farm-house speculating upon the weather, his attention was drawn to the approach of Davy Williams, the head borough or constable of Banstead, who entered the yard in haste, and advanced towards him with an expression of concern and sorrow upon his hard-featured countenance.

'Good morning, Master Clinton,' said Williams, as he entered. 'I have brought you unpleasant tidings this morning, and sorry I am to be the bearer of it, but I thought it would be of service to the young man to let you know it as early as possible.'

'To whom do you allude?' inquired Farmer Clinton; but even as he spoke the color faded slowly from his cheeks, and the question was in a tone which evinced anxiety and suspense.

'I am speaking of your son,' replied the constable, speaking in a lower voice as he glanced towards the lad who was watering the horses at the pond. 'He was taken by the keepers, at King'swood, last night, or rather this morning, together with a gipsy tinker, and taken to the cage at Banstead for poaching, trespass, and illegal possession of game. There will be a charge of assault preferred by one of the keepers, too, and altogether I think it will require the attention of all his friends to get him off upon paying a fine, instead of being sent to Kingston gaol. His previous good character will be in his favor to be sure, but Mr. Montgomery is very severe upon offenders against the game laws, because he was a keen sportsman in his youth, and likes a shot now at times.'

While Williams was speaking the farmer had been much agitated, though he strove to conceal his emotion as much as possible from the constable. Davy Williams continuing to speak so long, he was enabled to subdue his agitation to some extent, and then he seemed to reflect upon the constable's communication, and finally assumed an air of surprise.

'You must be mistaken, Williams,' said he. 'My son has not been absent, and is on the farm at this moment.'

It was now the constable's turn to be surprised, and he regarded the farmer with a look of amazement and incredulity.

'Well, it is possible,' said he, scratch

ing his head after a moment's pause, with a puzzled expression of countenance, 'but it is not very probable that I did not know your son when I saw the keeper bring him and the gipsy to the cage last night.'

'You might have been deceived by an accidental resemblance,' observed Clinton. 'Such mistakes do sometimes occur, as the other day, at Croydon, for instance.'

'Aye, but there the mistake was made by a man who had never seen your son before,' returned Williams. 'It is not very likely that I should make such a mistake, Master Clinton.'

'But you must have done so,' exclaimed Clinton, with some asperity. 'I tell you that my son went to Mitcham, and on his return passed the rest of the evening at Mr. Owen's, returning home about eleven o'clock. He retired to rest soon afterwards, and I am confident that he never left the house until six o'clock this morning.'

'This is another Croydon job, I suppose,' observed Williams, with a perplexed look. 'I cannot understand it. I should be sorry to suspect an innocent man, Mr. Clinton, but I really cannot help thinking that your son must have left the house without your knowledge after he had retired, as you thought, for the night. Seeing is believing, you know; and I saw your son when I locked him up in Banstead cage as plainly as I now see you.'

'Then the evidence of your own senses may now convince you of your mistake, since nothing else will,' returned Clinton, in a tone of mingled triumph and asperity, and he pointed with his hand to a field adjoining the farm-yard.

The constable glanced in the direction indicated by the old farmer, and to his unspeakable surprise, saw Edwin Clinton walking down the farther side of the field, with a gun under his arm.

'Well I shall never dare to trust the evidence of my own eyesight again?' said he, as soon as he had recovered from his amazement sufficiently to give it vent in speech. 'Why I even called the prisoner by name, and he answered to it! I cannot understand it—I am fairly nonplussed, Master Clinton; but I am heartily glad that the culprit is not your son, and so I wish you good-morning.'

'Good morning,' returned Clinton, and as soon as the constable had left the farm-yard, he crossed the adjoining field to meet his son, with whom he had a

long and earnest conversation, the purport of which will in due time be made known to the reader.

* * * * *

After parting from Ernest Montgomery on the night before Davy Williams' visit to the Willows, Clinton rode at a brisk pace over Banstead Downs towards the village of Cheam, but when he had ridden some distance, he diverged to the right, in a direction leading to Sutton. The fineness and whiteness of the dust which in summer covers the road in this neighborhood, and converts into millers, while it half-chokes them, the visitors to Epsom races, indicates that the soil is a thick stratum of chalk, and in some parts of the hamlet there are deep pits from which it has been dug for lime. Clinton slackened his horse's pace as he drew near the oldest of these pits, which had been long disused, and on reaching the spot, he dismounted, and led his steed down into a romantic dell, formed by the shrubs which grew on the broken sides of the pit.

The red glare which glowed upon the masses of chalk, now fading, and now increasing in brilliancy—and boisterous laughter of unseen revellers, indicated that a tribe of the lawless vagrants called gipseys were holding their orgies in that secluded spot. Leading his horse down the steep declivity which led to their encampment, Clinton stood a moment to survey them before advancing farther. Three or four tents were pitched at the bottom of the pit, nearly concealed from the observation of the passing traveller by the blackthorn and holly bushes which grew luxuriantly on the side of the declivity, and shot out among the chalk, which rose like a high and massive wall between the dell and the road. Around a fire sat a dozen men and women of the Gipsy race, smoking pipes and drinking ale.

'What, carousing yet?' exclaimed Clinton, advancing towards the gipsies.

'What, Clinton, my boy!' cried one of the gipsies, springing up and shaking his hand. 'You are quite welcome, my prince of high toby men!'

Clinton took a draught of the ale that was immediately offered to him, and then exclaimed:

'I feel as if I would like to take a gallop over the heath into somebody's preserves—who'll go?'

'I'll go,' answered Ned Lovell.

'Come, then,' said Clinton, and hav-



THE MASKED HIGHWAYMAN.

ing borrowed a gun of one of the gipsies, he and Ned Lovell set out alone together.

They crossed the common in silence, Clinton being still under the influence of the feelings which had prompted him to sally forth upon this expedition, and at length the sombre woods and plantations of Kingswood Warren, were dimly seen through the obscurity and the distance.

'I think you have done well to commence operations in this neighborhood,' observed Ned Lovell, 'for about here the name of Clinton will protect you when the mask falls.'

The highwayman made an affirmative response, and then he and the gipsy walked on in silence for some distance.

The highwayman and his gipsy companion ascended a steep bank over-run with wild ivy, and clambering over the fence, stood within the enclosure of Kingswood Warren. They plunged at

once into the thick plantations, and the walk and the moonlight having changed the current of the highwayman's feelings, as well as thoughts, he entered with spirit into the purpose which had brought him to the well-stocked preserves of Kingswood from the gipsy encampment in the chalk pit at Sutton. In half an hour he and the gipsie, Lovell, had each killed a brace of pheasants, and they then turned their steps towards Banstead.

As they were about to descend towards the road, another pheasant whirled by and Ned Lovell raised his gun and shot it. At this instant both Clinton and Lovell heard the keepers pursuing them, and therefore they quickly took to flight.

The rustling of the shrubs occasioned by their hasty flight indicated to the keepers and watchers of the preserve the direction taken by the poachers.—They were soon close in the rear of Clinton and Lovell, who finding them-

selves on the verge of a deep chalk pit, attempted to run along the edge of the eretaceous rampart until they reached some place from which the road was more easily accessible. Their purpose was frustrated, however, by their pursuers, and finding their retreat intercepted in that direction, they boldly faced the danger which menaced them in attempting to descend the almost perpendicular side of the pit.

Clinton was foremost, and grasping a young fir-tree, he steadied his body by holding on to it while he slid down the perpendicular cliff until his feet reached a narrow ledge. Looking upward he beheld Ned Lovell in the grasp of four men, and though he might have accomplished the perilous descent in safety and thus effected his escape, he resolved to make an attempt to rescue his companion.

Still holding the young fir, with his feet firmly upon the ledge of rock, and with an upward spring, which the recoil of the fir-tree much assisted, he alighted upon the edge of the chalk pit.

Felling one of the keepers with a blow of his powerful arm, which constituted the assault alluded to by Davy Williams, he raised his gun and presented it in a menacing manner to the others. The piece was instantly struck up by one of the party, and discharged in the air, and then the keeper who had so far incapacitated him from doing serious mischief closed with him, and attempted to secure him.

Ned Lovell struggled desperately to escape, but he was held in a firm grasp by two of the party, and when the keeper who had grappled with the highwayman was reinforced by the man whom the latter had knocked down, Clinton was likewise secured; and their guns having been taken from them, and their arms bound behind them, they were taken towards Banstead, in the custody of their captors.

Rousing the village constable from his slumbers, the keepers transferred their prisoners to his custody, and in a few minutes Clinton and Lovell were safely lodged in the little goal or round house of Banstead, and the iron-bound and nail-studded door well locked and barred.

'We are in for it now, Clinton,' said the gipsey.

'Look at that,' returned Clinton, placing in Ned's hand something he had picked up from among the straw at their feet.

'A spike,' exclaimed the gipsey with a start of joyful surprise as the moon-beam, which struggled through the barred window enabled him to perceive what the object was.

Clinton immediately began operating upon the ceiling with the spike, and the progress which he made in picking it away was greater even than he expected.

At length the plaster was cleared for a space of eighteen square inches, and Clinton commenced the more laborious task of breaking the laths.

In half an hour the laths were broken through, and only the tiles were between the prisoners and liberty. The moon was now sinking behind the distant wood, but sufficient light came through the barred window of the round-house for Clinton and the gipsey to decide by throwing up a guinea, which should first pass the aperture, which was to be made in the roof.

Precedence being won by the highwayman, he mounted on his companion's back, removed the tiles over the hole which he had made in the ceiling, and protruding his head through the opening, looked quickly and cautiously around.

'All right!—the coast is clear,' said he, and passing through the aperture, he bent over it, and gave his hand to the gipsey to assist him to reach the roof.

As soon as Ned Lovell had got his head and shoulders above the tiles, Clinton dropped to the ground, where he alighted in safety, and was quickly followed by Ned.

They listened a moment, but all was still around, and not a solitary footstep could be heard. The surrounding objects were becoming involved in deeper obscurity as the waning moon sank lower and lower behind the dark and solemn woods, and the gloom favored their escape.

After exchanging a few words, rapidly spoken, but in a low and cautious tone, Clinton and the gipsey separated, the former going towards the village of Cheam, and the latter to the encampment of his people in the chalk pit at Sutton.

Davy Williams, the village-constable and round-house keeper, having occasion to go to Cheam that morning, instructed his son to give the prisoners their breakfast, and visited the Willows farm as recorded in the beginning of this chapter.

The reader has seen how he was be

wildered by seeing Edwin Clinton in the vicinity of his father's house, and he returned to Banstead in haste, impressed with the belief that, if the Wiltshire highwayman and the farmer's son was not one and the same person, the former at least was in safe custody at the round-house.

On visiting the cage, directly he reached Banstead, his exultation at having, as he thought, captured the notorious Black Mask, was changed into mortification and rage on discovering that the prisoners had escaped. His vexation was increased when, in the course of the day, he heard that Ernest Montgomery had been waylaid and robbed on the Downs by a masked highwayman; and when he thought of the reward of a hundred pounds offered for Clinton's apprehension, he was almost beside himself with rage at the recollection of the prize that had slipped through his fingers.

He had hastened to the chalk pit at Sutton immediately he discovered the escape of his prisoners, but the tents of the gipsies had been struck, and not a trace remained of the encampment save the ashes of the fire and sundry broken tobacco pipes and scattered bones of poultry and game.

CHAPTER V.

THE SISTER AND THE MISTRESS.

ON the evening succeeding the capture of Clinton and Ned Lovell, at Kingswood Warren, and their subsequent escape from the cage at Banstead, Rose Clinton left the Coppice, and proceeded towards Cheam, with the intention of calling at the Willows farm to see her father and Edwin, and learn all she possibly could relative to the robbery of Ernest Montgomery on the night before.

At the extremity of the village of Banstead there stood, at that time, a dilapidated and gloomy-looking mansion, which had for some cause been permitted to fall into deep decay, and Rose had nearly reached it when she saw before her a young man whose personal appearance immediately struck her as bearing a strong resemblance to that of her brother. He was standing in a musing position near the grey and ivy-covered ruins of the old mansion, and the nearer she approached, the deeper

became her conviction that she beheld her brother.

Before she came up to the spot where he was standing, he turned among the outer ruins, and the maiden thought that he had discerned and wished to avoid her, on account of the affair of the preceding night. But just as she reached the ruins, Clinton—for it was really him—stepped from the concealment of an ivy-mantled wall, and stood directly in her path.

'Rosé!' said he, as if surprised at meeting her, and extended his hand, but the maiden did not proffer hers to the fraternal grasp.

'It is sometime since we last met,' he observed, as if displeased at her coldness, 'yet you do not seem very pleased to see me.'

'Why have you sullied the name of Clinton with the taint of crime?' said his sister, in a reproachful tone. 'Was not dissipation and debauchery disgrace enough, or do you wish to bring your father's grey hairs to the tomb to which your earlier misdeeds turned your mother?'

'Why renew the memory of the past, Rose?' returned the highwayman, speaking in a deprecating tone, while his countenance lowered heavily. 'What I have done cannot be helped now, and it is giving unnecessary pain to yourself and to me to recur to such unpleasant topics.'

'Why, then, have you begun in this neighborhood a repetition of the crimes that have given you an unenviable notoriety in Wiltshire?' said Rose, speaking in a tone of painful excitement.

'I suppose you allude to the little affair with the keepers, at Kingswood, last night?' observed Clinton with a forced smile.

'What, new disgrace?' exclaimed his sister, for Rose had not heard anything of her brother's capture and escape that morning.

'Oh, you have not heard, I see,' responded Clinton. 'Come within the ruins, then, and tell me what you did allude to just now.'

The highwayman took a bunch of skeleton keys from his pocket, with one of which he opened a door which afforded ingress into the interior of the ruins: Rose followed her brother into the ruins, after a brief moment of hesitation, and he closed the door by which they had entered.

'I alluded to the robbery you committed upon Mr. Montgomery, when

you met him last night on the Downs,' observed Rose Clinton; and as she spoke she examined the highwayman's countenance as keenly as the partial light would permit to observe the effect of her words.

'Ah! has he betrayed me, then? he shall dearly pay for it!' exclaimed Clinton.

'He has not betrayed you!' said Rose, with animation in her tone and glance. 'Ernest Montgomery is a man of honor, and when his word is pledged, even though to the man who had robbed him, it is sacred and inviolable. I live at the Coppice, and knowing you to be my brother, it was natural that he should reveal to me the fact that he had recognized you in the highwayman by whom he was last night waylaid and robbed.'

'I understand now the spring of Montgomery's conduct last night,' observed Clinton, in a musing tone, as if he were communing with himself, rather than addressing his sister. 'Well, that will be an additional motive with him not to betray me.'

'But are you not ashamed of gaining impunity by such means?' inquired Rose, with a flushed countenance, and speaking in a tone of mingled anger and expostulation. 'You know that the course which you have adopted, marked alike by lawlessness and duplicity, may at any moment lead to a catastrophe so terrible, that I feel my limbs shudder and my heart grow sick as I think of it. You know to what I allude, and you have never shown such a degree of affection or regard for those who should be dear to you, as would lead me to hope that you would, in such a case, scruple at purchasing your own safety by the sacrifice of the innocent.'

'I forgive your bitterness on account of your candor,' returned her brother, 'because the latter is a quality which I admire, though circumstances will not always allow me to practice it. But your fears are groundless, Rose; the innocent one is in no danger.'

'I know' not why it is so, I am a puzzle to myself! I feel as if I were wholly without free will, and acting evil or good just as I am dragged hither or thither by the spirits of darkness and of light in their contention for dominion over me. The struggle goes on, but the issue is undecided, victory inclining at one time to the good angel, at another to the powers of darkness. Sometimes I feel the beauty of virtue dawning upon my soul, but before it illumines the dark-

ness which its light irradiates for a moment, and just when my heart begins to sigh for the splendor of its meridian glory, the enemy throws some new temptation in my path, and away go all my aspirations after virtue, and all my dreams of the peace it would cause to spring up in my soul, and the happiness it would shed upon my future life.

As the highwayman gave utterance to this confession of moral weakness, he covered his face with his hands, and Rose could perceive that he was more deeply moved than he would probably have acknowledged.

'Oh, that those golden moments could be made available for your salvation,' exclaimed Rose Clinton, clasping her hands. 'If some one were by to counsel and encourage you, those sweet and chastening influences would be confirmed, and evil impressions in time eradicated from your heart.'

'You spoke to Mr. Montgomery of leaving this country for America; why not carry out that intention? The preparation for your voyage will serve to occupy you during the short time that it would be necessary for you to remain in England, and on the other side of the Atlantic, the absence of temptation and constant occupation in agricultural pursuits, will enable you to complete the work of self-reformation. If you require means, and wish not to ask them from your father, though I know that he both can and would readily extend his assistance, hesitate not to embrace Mr. Montgomery's generous offer.'

'You have half determined me to adopt a course that has often suggested itself to my mind,' observed Clinton, when his sister had done speaking.

'I am going to the Willows,' observed Rose, after a moment's pause. 'Shall I acquaint father with your wish, and ask him to extend you his assistance to enable you to carry it into effect.'

Clinton hesitated a moment and then answered. 'If I decide upon this step, I will place myself unconditionally in my father's hands, and if he will engage a passage for me at Bristol, to Boston or New York, he shall provide whatever I require himself, and place no money at my command until I am aboard the vessel, and the anchor weighed.'

'You have decided well,' rejoined his sister. 'Such a resolution would keep you from temptation, and inspire father with confidence in your promises of amendment. Come with me to the Willows; and until you leave for Bristol, remain

at Cheam, and seclude yourself entirely from all society that might tend to draw you again within the influence of evil.

Clinton had unlocked the door while his sister was speaking, and having unlocked it, he offered her his arm in silence, and Rose having taken it as she uttered the last words, they proceeded together towards the village of Cheam.

Rose Clinton, when she reached the Willows, found old Clinton sitting alone in his parlor; there was a cheerful fire burning upon the hearth, but no candle shed its light around, and the old man sat with his elbows upon his knees, and his face buried in his bony hands, if as a prey to grief. Rose was at no loss to conjecture its cause, but tears started to her eyes as she perceived the unmistakable evidences of a devouring sorrow upon the old man's pale and furrowed countenance.

She communicated to him her recent conversation with her brother, and the old farmer seemed pleased with his proposition, and told Rose that he would consider of it, and acquaint her brother with his decision. She then took her leave of her father, on account of the lateness of the hour, and hastened back to Banstead; within a mile of the Willows farm she was met by Ernest Montgomery, who had come to meet her, and only parted from her close to the gates of the Coppice. To him she communicated the conversation she had had with her brother in the ruins of the old mansion, and young Clinton's determination gave him a pleasure which he did not attempt to conceal.

Early the following morning, young Clinton entered the southern suburbs of the metropolis on foot, and gazed up at the windows of a house, the curtains of which were closely drawn, for the mighty tongue of St. Paul's had only that moment proclaimed the hour of eight; and our hero was about to retrace his steps, when the white drapery was parted, and he caught a glimpse of a very beautiful female countenance at the window.

This lovely apparition seemed to banish his irresolution at once, for he perceived that the female had recognised him, and he therefore crossed the street, and knocked at the door.

The door was opened by a meanly clad old woman, who also appeared to know him, for she accosted him familiarly, and he entered as if he felt himself at home. Ascending the stairs three at a time, he perceived a door

half-open on the landing, and the piquant countenance of the same young female whom he had just before seen at the window, peered around the door, and welcomed him with a bewitching smile of joy.

He sprang forward and catching her in his arms, imprinted a kiss upon her moist red lips, as she closed the door behind him, then he threw himself upon a chair, and drawing the young girl towards him, he again kissed her lips, her cheeks, and her forehead, with a fervour which left no doubt of the degree of intimacy which existed between them.

The chamber into which she had admitted him was neatly furnished, and an air of comfort pervaded the arrangements which would not have been expected from the external appearance of the house. The drapery of the bed, and the curtains at the window were of snowy whiteness, and a good carpet covered the floor.

The fair occupant of the chamber was about nineteen years of age, short of stature, but full and voluptuous in figure, and so admirably proportioned, that she might have served as a study for the inimitable female figures of Raphael and Goldoni. Her head was cast in the Grecian style, and a profusion of jetty ringlets, straying and peeping from under a modish nightcap, for she had but just quitted her couch when Clinton beheld her at the window, were parted from her spotless forehead, and fell upon her admirably modelled shoulders. Her features were not faultlessly regular, but her eyes were large and dark, the lashes which fringed the lids being long, thick and silky, her teeth were even and of pearly whiteness, her lips were full and tinted with the rich vermilion hue of the reddest coral, evincing a sensual temperament, and seeming to constantly invite kisses, and an indescrivable air of piquancy heightened the effect of features not strictly beautiful, and constituted their chief attraction: but, if the young girl's countenance was not so faultless as a rigid connoisseur in feminine charms might desire, her figure was undeniably fine, though not seen to the greatest advantage at the moment when we introduce her to our readers; yet something of the graceful slope of the shoulders might be discerned, her snowy night-dress only partially concealed the semi-globes of living ivory beneath, and her small white feet might have rivalled those of the choicest female statues emanating from the genius

of the most eminent sculptors of ancient Greece.

'Now let me dress myself—I am sure you have kissed me enough,' said the young girl, smiling as she gently released herself from the impassioned embrace in which Clinton had held her.—'There, get along!' she added, playfully, as our hero, before letting her go, bared her snowy neck in an enthusiasm of admiration, and kissed first the sloping and dimpled shoulder, and then the white and heaving bosom, the merest glimpse of which might have moved the passions of an anchorite.

'I never saw you look more beautiful than at this moment, Ellen,' observed Clinton, as his mistress began, with much deliberation, to dress.

'Flatterer!' returned Ellen, her dark eyes kindling with pleasure and the gratification of a natural and pardonable weakness. 'What has brought you to town so early?'

'I will tell you when breakfast is ready,' replied our hero. 'I know your curiosity and impatience will hasten both the dressing and culinary operation.'

In a few minutes Ellen had completed her toilette and prepared breakfast, and as she handed our hero the nicely-buttered muffins, and raised her dark eyes to his countenance, he read therein the most irrepressible curiosity and impatience, not unmingled with a slight feeling of anxiety.

'I see that you are on thorns, my dear Ellen,' said he, 'and therefore your natural curiosity shall be gratified at once. In a word, then, I am about to leave this country forever, and settle in America as a farmer.'

Ellen opened her large eyes to their utmost limits, and looked at her lover as if she could scarcely credit the evidence of her senses.

'The Black Mask, the prince of high tobymen, the bold robber of the Salisbury coach, turned farmer!' said she, laughing until tears gemmed her dark eyes, like dew-drops upon ripe sloes.—'The gallant Clinton live in the back woods, grubbing up trees and wrestling with grizzly bears, with Ellen Lee presiding over the domestic arrangements of your wigwam, and rearing papooses to run wild over the prairie! No, that part of the picture will never be realized.'

'If I went to Paris, would you accompany me?' inquired Clinton, whose resolution of embracing a rural life in America already began to waver.

'Gladly,' replied his mistress, her countenance brightening up as she spoke. 'I should be delighted with Paris, I am sure!'

'But I have not funds sufficient for the purpose,' observed Clinton, hesitatingly, 'and my father will not place them in my hands until I am on board a vessel bound for an American port, and the anchor is weighed for sailing.'

'But you can procure funds as you always have, and then for dear delightful Paris! Come, dear Edwin, you must think of this; and do not let me hear any more of your burying yourself in the backwoods of America.'

Clinton made no rejoinder to this, but seemed lost in thought.

Ellen summoned the old woman, who had admitted our hero, to remove the breakfast equipage, and then she made her bed, conversing the while with her lover on different subjects.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DOG AND DUCK—AND THE BURGLARY.

THE 'Dog and Duck' tavern, in St George's Fields, with all the associations connected with it, now belongs to the past, and there are few persons living who remember it as it was in the days of its equivocal glory, which is the period of time, in which the scene of our story is laid. Then it was the favorite resort of all the thieves, highwaymen and suspicious characters in the metropolis of London.

The gardens of the 'Dog and Duck' were well attended on the evening which succeeded that on which Clinton had the conversation with his sister in the ruins at Banstead. The flowers had departed with the genial rays of summer, but clumps of evergreens remained to enliven the scene, and strings of colored lamps were festooned across the path from tree to tree. Highwaymen, foot-pads, sharpers, and pugilists, together with their mistresses, formed the majority of the company, and the clatter of glasses, mingled with the sound of revelry, resounded on every side.

In one of the alcoves, were seated young Clinton and his mistress, the charming Ellen Lee.

'What, bold Clinton!' exclaimed a tall, swaggering fellow, in a laced coat and cocked hat. 'How are you?'

'Fred Hamilton!' answered Clinton, rising and shaking the proffered hand of the individual who addressed him.—'How are you, my Trojan?'

'Well in health, Clinton, but pockets at low water mark,' returned Hamilton, who was a well-formed man, about thirty-five years of age, and might have been considered tolerably good-looking but for the air of dissipation and recklessness stamped indelibly upon his countenance.

'My own pockets are not over very well lined,' said our hero, 'but we have some claret here, my boy, and you are heartily welcome. None more so, Fred Hamilton.'

'By Jove, you only repeat my own sentiments with regard to yourself, Clinton,' said Hamilton, taking a seat, and helping himself to a glass of claret. 'This meeting is particularly opportune, my boy, for I am going to ride a few miles this side of London to-night, and Gus Rivers was to have shared in the enterprise, but as his ill-starred destiny would have it, he was nailed to-day, and lugged up in the jug; so if you have nothing in hand for to-night, you may take his place, and, by Jove, there is not another cove on the same lay that I would rather have with me.'

Clinton consented to go, and having escorted Ellen Lee to her lodgings, the two highwaymen, Clinton and Hamilton mounted their horses and galloped off.

'It is a bit of moonlight you are going to do, or a crib you are going to crack, Fred?' inquired Clinton, as he and his companion rode through the village of Carshalton.

'The latter,' returned Hamilton. 'I suppose you mean to join me in it?'

'Where is the place?' inquired Clinton, when he saw that they were entering the village.

'The Coppice—squire Montgomery's,' replied his companion.

'The devil!' exclaimed Clinton, in a tone of mingled surprise and vexation. 'I wish it was somewhere else, but I'll do it.'

In a few moments they reined their horses in a secluded lane, at the side of Mr. Montgomery's grounds, and having dismounted, tied their horses to a tree. The moon was now down and their enterprise was favored by the darkness.

The robbers, having disguised their faces with black masks which they drew from their pockets, bored through the shutters of a window, cut the glass with a diamond and leaped softly into

a room. Then, having lighted a dark lantern which they carried, they opened the door of the apartment in which they found themselves, and quietly ascended the richly carpeted stairs. On reaching a corridor into which three or four doors opened, Hamilton drew from his pockets a brace of pistols, one of which he gave to Clinton, desiring him to remain on the watch, and armed with the other himself he entered the chamber occupied by the elder Montgomery and his lady.

The passages were involved in darkness, and the most profound silence reigned throughout the mansion. Even the footfall of Frederick Hamilton reached not the ears of his confederate, so cautiously did he glide over the soft carpet. In a few minutes he heard a sound as if the lid of a box was being forced open, followed by the chink of coin—that ringing metallic sound which there is no mistaking. All at once there was a shriek, a menacing and deep-toned imprecation, and a scuffling sound, and a cold chill struck to the heart of our hero, and with the clammy perspiration starting from his forehead, he sprang towards the stairs.

Down them he would have plunged, reckless in his dread of encountering the agonised looks of his sister, and the reproachful glances of young Montgomery; but a door opened near the head of the stairs, and his arms were held with a firm grasp by a man in his shirt.

He dropped the pistol in the corridor, for a feeling stronger than his desire, to escape prevented him from using it against his opponent, whom he rightly conjectured to be Ernest Montgomery, and at the same moment Hamilton rushed along the corridor, and bounded down the stairs. Clinton struggled desperately to break from his captor, but he uttered no cry or oath, lest his voice should reveal an identity which might remain undiscovered should he escape. But young Montgomery was full his equal in strength and agility, and Clinton put forth all his muscular power to no purpose. The elder Montgomery now appeared with a light, and the servants rushed from their dormitories at the sound of the scuffle, so that escape became hopeless.

The black mask had fallen from his face during the struggle, and the light carried by the stern old squire flashing upon his countenance, revealed to Ernest Montgomery the features of the highwayman who had robbed him two nights before on Banstead Downs.

Montgomery started, and Clinton averted his head; had the recognition occurred a moment earlier, he might have escaped, for his captor would have been disarmed by the discovery that his prisoner was the brother of his beloved Rose. But the young man's father and the servants were present, and Clinton was held firmly by half a dozen hands.

'Do you know the robber, Ernest?' said the squire.

'I am grieved to say that he is the son of Mr. Clinton, of Cheam,' said Ernest, turning his countenance from his father to conceal his emotion.

'I am grieved that Mr. Clinton has such a son,' rejoined Mr. Montgomery, 'but he shall not escape this time as he did two nights ago. Hold the villain while Mr. Ernest puts on his clothes,' he continued addressing the butler and footman, 'and then dress yourselves quickly, and take the prisoner to the empty room in the left wing.'

Ernest and his father hastily dressed themselves, and the former held our hero, who preserved a moody silence, while the servants returned to their dormitories to draw on their nether habiliments. Old Montgomery, picked up the pistol, and held it presented to our hero, and when the servants returned, he was marched off in the centre of them, the old squire leading the van, and Ernest bringing up the rear, to the room which the former had mentioned.

When the door closed behind him, our hero found himself in darkness, but he could just discern a window on the other side of the room, and he walked towards it. He heard the key turn in the lock, and then the receding footsteps of Ernest and his father; he listened to ascertain if the door was guarded, and soon distinguished the voices of the butler and the footman, which told him that they were on guard to prevent his escape. He cautiously examined the fastenings of the window, and found that the sash could be raised with ease, but through the obscurity of night he saw dimly four iron stanchions on the outside. Still the window offered the only means of escape, and hopeless as the idea seemed, for even if he could succeed in removing one of the stanchions, the height from the ground was too great for him to drop from with the slightest hope of escape, for if not dashed to pieces, fractured limbs were inevitable, he clung to it in his desperation as drowning men cling to a reed floating on the surface of the stream.

Raising the sash with extreme caution to the height of a few inches, he thrust out his hand, and feeling round the bottom of one of the stanchions, he found that the mortar in which they were set, was soft with damp, and crumbling with the lapse of years, and that the stone still was not only of a friable nature, but cracked in two places. To remove the stanchion, therefore, though a difficult and arduous task, was quite possible; but then came the consideration of the question—how was he to get to the ground? While revolving this apparently insuperable difficulty in his mind, his attention was drawn to something which the night breeze caused to flap at intervals against the window.

Thrusting his arm through the window as far as he could, he discovered that the whole wall was covered with a thick growth of ivy. Here was the means by which he could descend, and he already felt he was free. He worked steadily all night, with the least possible noise, and at the first light of the morning, he wrenched the last stanchion from its place. Then passing through the window he descended to the ground and made good his escape.

Two or three hours elapsed before Clinton's evasion was discovered, and then the coachman and groom coming to relieve guard, opened the door to assure themselves of the prisoner's security. It was now daylight, and their surprise may be conceived when they saw the room empty, the window open, and the iron stanchion which Clinton had wrenched from its setting, lying upon the floor. Scarcely crediting their senses, they rushed to the window and looked out; the disturbed state of the ivy showed the daring manner in which the escape had been effected, and they had nothing to do but to report the prisoner's evasion to Mr. Montgomery.

Williams, the constable was sent for to the Coppice and was made acquainted with the events of the night. He was told that the robber was no other than the son of farmer Clinton of the Willows; and Williams therefore, set off for Cheam, with a pair of handcuffs, and a brace of pistols in his pockets, and attended by a couple of athletic laborers. On reaching the Willows, the door being opened by Mary, he walked straight in, followed by his myrmidons, and opening the door of the worthy farmer's little parlor, he found the old man and Edwin at breakfast.

The latter exchanged a rapid glance with his father, and started to his feet, while old Clinton turned pale and fell back in his chair, as if oppressed by a vague presentiment of impending evil.

'You are my prisoner, Mr. Clinton,' said the constable, advancing and seizing Edwin by the arm.

'A prisoner!' repeated the young farmer, almost sinking beneath the load of crushing reflections which seemed all at once to overwhelm. 'A prisoner! Of what am I accused?'

'Of burglary and robbery at Squire Montgomery's, at Banstead, last night, and maybe a few other things besides,' replied Williams.

'But I have not been off the farm since last evening at nine o'clock,' returned Edwin, appealing to his father.

'It is of no use, Edwin,' said old Clinton, in a voice rendered almost inaudible by emotion. 'You cannot hope any longer to separate your identity from that of—but what am I saying? I tremble to give it utterance, and yet it must be told. This last stroke will break your sister's heart, and my grey hairs will descend in shame and sorrow to the grave.'

'I am truly sorry for you, Mr. Clinton,' said the constable, turning to the sorrowing old man, 'but I must do my duty, you know.'

'Though perfectly innocent of the offence of which I am accused, of which I knew nothing until you mentioned it,' said Edwin Clinton to the constable, 'I am willing to go with you to the Coppice, trusting to Providence to make my innocence manifest.'

'But the secret?' said his father, anxiously.

'Shall be preserved,' returned Edwin. 'Though I am not in a position this time to prove an *alibi*, for I doubt if your testimony would be received, all circumstances considered, yet I doubt not that something will transpire to remove from me the obloquy of this suspicion that clings to me like a fatality. I am sorry to see you shake your head, Williams.'

'And I am sorry that I cannot help it,' returned the constable. 'I do not want to be hard upon you, though; so, if you will promise to walk quietly between these men, I shall not clasp the bracelets on you.'

'There is no occasion for it,' said young Clinton, putting on his hat. 'I shall go with you quietly enough, since I go willingly.'

The laborers placed themselves one on each side of the young farmer, and in this manner they proceeded towards Banstead, Davy Williams walking behind with his right hand upon a loaded pistol in his coat pocket.

CHAPTER VII.

BAIL AND REFORM.

Mr. Montgomery being in the commission of the peace, there was a room in the mansion set apart for the purpose of hearing complaints and examining offenders. In this room Edwin Clinton was introduced by Davy Williams, on reaching the Coppice, and in a few minutes the squire came in, and took the magisterial chair. The evidence need not be recapitulated in full, as the identity of the prisoner with the burglar captured by Ernest Montgomery was the only point which admitted the slightest doubt. Edwin solemnly asseverated his innocence, but reserved his defence; and the affair of his arrest, at Croydon, and the mystery which hung over that of Kingswood, threw so much suspicion upon him that Mr. Montgomery thought it his duty to commit him to prison to await his trial at the next Spring assizes, in order that the case might receive the fullest investigation. Edwin was, therefore, handcuffed to prevent his escape on the way to the jail, and being removed by the constable, a light cart was hired for his conveyance, and the young farmer slept that night in one of the cells of the county prison in Horsemonger Lane.

While Edwin was immured within four stone walls, and daily journals were proclaiming to their thousands of readers, the capture, the daring escape and subsequent re-capture of the notorious Black Mask, while, too, poor Rose Clinton was plunged in the deepest grief on more accounts than one, and dared not reveal the full measure of her sorrow and its causes to any one; the Willows homestead had likewise become the abode of sadness and mourning. Mr. Clinton remained absorbed in grief for some time after his son's departure in the custody of Williams and his assistants, and when at length he strove to rouse himself, and busy himself about the farm, his mind continued preoccupied and his motions mechanical; then one of the laborers brought him the intelligence that Edwin had been com-

mitted to the county jail, and he retired into the house, and again gave way to his grief, which was the more poignant as there was no one from whom he could receive consolation, or to whom he could unbosom the entire weight of the trouble that was crushing him to the dust.

That night the old man was seriously ill, and on the next morning he was unable to raise from his bed. Grief had wrung every fibre of his heart beyond the power of endurance, and left its impress upon his blanched and furrowed countenance, as indelible as if it had been seared with a red-hot iron. Mary, therefore, sent a lad employed upon the farm over to Banstead, to convey to poor Rose, the sad condition into which her father had been plunged by the same events that had overwhelmed her own heart with grief. Rose hastened to the Willows, and the first glance which she cast upon her father's pale and haggard countenance crushed every hope of his ever rising from the bed upon which an overload of grief had cast him.

Three days elapsed, during which Mr. Clinton still kept his bed, and seemed sinking into the grave, under the pressure of overwhelming sorrow, when a tall gentleman—a stranger to all who saw him ride through Cheam—dismounted from his horse at the Willows, and giving the animal to a boy to hold, knocked at the door. It was opened by Mary, who, on being informed that his name was Hemming, showed him into the parlor, where he was almost immediately joined by Rose, who had not returned to the Coppice on account of her father's precarious state. After a few minutes conversation, Rose led the way to the old man's chamber, where they remained more than an hour. At the expiration of that time, Rose and the stranger left the Willows in company, the latter desiring the boy who was holding his horse to put him in the stable, and give him some water and corn.

Mr. Hemming and Rose, conversing earnestly as they went, bent their steps towards Banstead, and stopping at the Coppice, the companionship much surprised the domestic. Mr. Montgomery was likewise surprised at the visit. Mr. Hemming was perfectly unknown to him but he proceeded to the library, and inquiring of Rose after the health of her father, turned towards Mr. Hemming as if waiting for him to open the business on which he had come.

'You have put the affairs entirely in a new light,' said Montgomery, at the close of an hour's conversation. 'Your narrative has cleared up much that was before dark, and I shall have no hesitation in signing an order for the release of Clinton upon bail being given for his appearance at the assize.'

'I will myself become one of his bondsmen, sir,' said Mr. Hemming, 'and Mr. Owen of Cheam, will join me!'

'The bail you offer is perfectly satisfactory, sir,' returned Mr. Montgomery, 'and I wish, for the young man's sake, that this course had been taken before.—Of course there will be no trial, for the grand jury must ignore the bill.'

Mr. Hemming and Rose then left the Coppice, and returned to Cheam, where they called upon Farmer Owen, who accompanied them back to the Willows.

Mr. Hemming then took his leave of old Clinton and the charming Rose, and giving a crown to the lad who had tended his horse, he mounted, and rode off in the same direction that he had come.

Edwin Clinton returned to the Willows on the following evening, having been liberated on the representations of Mr. Hemming, upon bail being put in by that gentleman and Farmer Owen for the young man's surrender at the next Spring assizes. He was inexpressibly grieved at the altered appearance of his father, and his feelings were likewise profoundly wounded by the pertinacity with which he found the belief entertained in the village of Cheam, that it was him who had committed the robberies in Wiltshire, and burglary at Banstead, and that his liberation on bail had only been obtained by the strenuous exertions of his friends.

Edwin secluded himself as much as possible, and when non-engaged in the necessary superintendence of the labors required to be performed upon the farm, he was conversing sadly and earnestly with his father or his sister, except during the hour which he devoted every evening to a visit to their neighbors, the Owens.

The old man continued to sink: his medical attendant gave no hope of his recovery, and it was evident that he would not survive the winter. Nor did he: one morning the shutters were observed to be closed, and the blinds at the upper windows drawn down, and it soon became known through the village that the old man had expired during the preceding night. He was buried in the

ground of the little old-fashioned church, at Cheam, Edwin and Rose being the only mourners, though many farmers and other persons in the village were present from a feeling of respect towards the worthy old man whose mortal remains they had assembled to see consigned to the earth.

That evening five persons were seated in the little parlor of the Willows farm, and an expression of sadness sat upon the countenance of each. On one side of the blazing log-fire sat Edwin Clinton, between his sister and his beloved Fanny, and on the other the parents of the latter. Darkness had sat in more than an hour, when Mary, who was seated in the kitchen wondering what changes at the Willows, and in her own position, would result from the demise of her old master, thought she heard a tap at the front door, and was opening the kitchen door to attend to it when she heard the front door opened, and immediately stood still to listen.

She heard an ejaculation of surprise which she conjectured to proceed from Rose, followed by a cautious 'hush,' from some person she had admired, and her curiosity being strongly excited by this incident, she peeped into the passage.

Rose had closed the door, and was ushering into the parlor a man enveloped in a long dark cloak, the ample folds of which shrouded his form, while the upturned collar aided his broad-rimmed hat, which was slouched very much over his brows, to conceal his countenance.

The passage being in darkness, recognition was impossible, but no sooner had the parlor door closed behind Rose Clinton and the cloaked unknown, then the inquisitive Mary glided along the passage, and set herself to listen.

The first voice which she heard was that of Edwin, but he spoke in so low a tone that she could hear only a few words of which she could make no sense. His tone was severe, but tempered with sadness, and a feeling of surprise was blended with other emotions in his first words.

There was a moment's pause, and then she seemed to hear the same voice again, that is, she heard a voice which she would have unhesitatingly pronounced to be that of Edwin Clinton, but for the difference in the feelings which its tone expressed, and those which seemed to prompt the preceding speaker, if they were not identical.—

Was it Edwin Clinton again speaking, but under the influence of other feelings than those which a moment before had prompted him?—or was it the unknown person whom Rose had admitted, and whose voice might, by an unaccountable coincidence, closely resemble that of Edwin Clinton? she could not decide; the voices were alike, but expressed different feelings.

She flattered herself with the hope of having a better look at him when she took the supper in, but Rose took that office upon herself, and Mary could find no pretext upon which to enter the parlor during the evening.

The Owens took their departure about nine o'clock, and an hour afterwards Edwin Clinton, his sister and Mary had retired to their respective chambers, yet the latter had not heard the front door opened for the egress of the unknown in the top-boots, and she knew that he had not left in company with the Owens, having peeped into the passage at the moment of their departure.

A week passed, the incidents of which, though partaking of the mysterious, may be briefly related.

Rose Clinton continued to reside at the Willows, in the capacity of her brother's housekeeper, and since the evening after her father's funeral, an acute observer might have discovered upon her lovely countenance, an expression of serenity and of hope for the future.

In the meantime, in the village and neighborhood, a variety of reports were set afloat concerning the Clintons and the Owens. First it was reported that Edwin Clinton and Fanny Owen were to be married immediately, and then that the engagement had been broken off at the instance of Fanny's parents.—Then it transpired that Owen had disposed of the lease of his farm, and sold all his live and dead stock by private contract, and was about to leave the neighborhood, and public opinion immediately became divided as to whether he intended to remove to a distant country, or to emigrate to America.

We shall not in this place attempt to decide upon the precise amount of truth and falsehood respectively contained in these various and conflicting reports.—Let it suffice, for the present, that Mr. Owen, with his wife and daughter, left Cheam for ever at the end of the period before mentioned, and that young Clinton and his sister continued to occupy the Willows.

On the evening of the day on which the Owens left the village, Rose Clinton and her brother were seated in the parlor at the Willows, before a blazing log-fire which roared and cracked as it flamed up the wide chimney.

Though their features were as much alike as could be expected from their opposite sex, yet those of her brother wore an expression altogether different from that which sat upon the lovely countenance of Rose. His arms were folded over his breast, and his countenance was turned from the light, which gave a moody and sombre aspect to his entire appearance.

'Of what are you thinking, Rose?' said he, speaking as if with an effort to shake off the gloom that weighed upon him, but without turning his countenance towards her.

'Nothing,' replied Rose.

'Yes you are, you are thinking of Ernest Montgomery,' returned her brother.

'Well, suppose that your surmise were correct?'

'It is no longer a surmise, but a certainty, Rose,' returned her brother.—

'That tell-tale blush has betrayed your secret more than words could have done. But I think I may safely congratulate you, for I believe him to be an honorable young man.'

'He is,' responded Rose, in a tone of enthusiastic confidence. 'I am glad now that I did not, on the occasion to which you just now alluded, acquaint him with the facts. I promised to explain the mystery at a future time, and you must yourself see the necessity of doing so; he has, doubtless, already learned some of the particulars from his father, as they were related to him by Mr. Hemming, and a more detailed explanation would remove from you the last shade of suspicion.'

'Will you contrive me an opportunity of rendering this explanation myself, Rose?' enquired Clinton, with some eagerness.

'Would you have sufficient command of your countenance and voice to do so?' returned Rose, looking up from her work.

'Assuredly,' said her brother. 'All suspicion will then, as you say, be removed, and the mystery apparently cleared up for ever. Ernest Montgomery will be sure to relate the story to others, and the farther it goes the better.'

'Then you shall have the opportunity you desire,' returned Rose, earnestly,

'and now let me implore you to seize this opportunity—the last you, in all probability, will ever have to retrieve your character, and adopt a mode of life at once honorable to yourself and useful to others, and to make what atonement may be in your power for your past misdeeds. The past cannot be recalled, but the memory of the evil that belongs to it may be obliterated by good, and the future is all our own.'

Clinton pledged his word to his sister that he would endeavour to follow her advice, and with averted head he left the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONFESSION AND LOVE.

On the following evening, Clinton, together with his sister Rose, and Ernest Montgomery, was seated in the little parlor at the Willows. Clinton said.

'I wished to meet you, Mr. Montgomery, because I was anxious to have an opportunity of clearing up, to your satisfaction, the mystery that for some time past has shrouded me, and thus cast off the injurious suspicions that were very naturally entertained concerning me. You are already aware that I have a brother, a twin brother, and that our extraordinary resemblance has led to those mistakes of identity which have been so injurious to me.'

'I will pass over the earlier and more venial errors of my brother, and say but little of the criminalities which marked his career previous to the period when my father came to Cheam. Love of pleasure led him into bad company, and his vicious associates by degrees made vice familiar to him, and at length initiated him into the mysteries of crime. The robberies committed by my brother in Wiltshire, led to active endeavours among the London runners to find out the highwayman who was known as the Black Mask, and it was discovered that his name was Clinton; and in the haunts of the dissipated and criminal, which he was in the habit of frequenting, it was farther ascertained that he described himself as the son of a farmer in Surrey. A description of his person was also obtained, and a warrant being issued for his apprehension, a Bow-street officer came down to Croydon on a market day, when he thought he might hear something of the highway-

man. At this time my brother had no communication with any of his family for several years, and we knew nothing concerning him, though we had reason to fear the worst. It was under these circumstances that I was arrested at Croydon, and relying upon the proving of an *alibi* to obtain my immediate liberation, I thought myself justified in refraining from a revelation of the circumstances which had led to the mistake under which I had been apprehended.'

'My prior knowledge of my brother's turpitude,' continued Clinton, 'would have prevented my mind from dwelling too deeply upon the Wiltshire robberies and my own arrest at Croydon, but on the following evening I was astounded by the discovery that he was in this neighborhood—in this very neighborhood in which search was being made for him by the officers of justice! I found that evening that he had been in the 'Red Lion,' where he had been mistaken for me, as I had been at Croydon for him, and had treated my father's men to ale. It was on that night, as I have since been informed by Rose, that he waylaid you on Banstead Downs; and early on the following morning the Kingswood affair occurred, when I was again supposed to be the offender. David Williams, the Banstead constable, came here to inform my father that I was locked up at Banstead, and seeing me here, conjectured rightly that it must be Black Mask whom he had in custody; but on hurrying back to Banstead, he found that the prisoner had escaped. Rose has doubtless informed you that on the evening of that day she met her brother at Banstead, and in consequence of what then passed between them he came here that same evening, and saw my father for the first time for several years. He expressed contrition, promised amendment, and threw himself unreservedly upon the old man's generosity of disposition.'

'My brother professed a desire to leave the country, and emigrate to the American colonies, where alone he could settle down into habits of industry and integrity, beyond the reach of temptation; and my father promised to supply him with the necessary funds. My father was to engage his passage, and no pecuniary assistance was to be rendered him until he was on board the vessel which was to convey him to the shores of America. This precaution my father took because he had been deceived

before by promises of amendment soon forgotten and violated. The precaution was not taken in vain; on the very following night the burglary and robbery at your father's house occurred, and my brother, being captured by you, was mistaken for me. Effecting his escape at the risk of his life, I was mistaken for him, examined and committed by your father, and lodged in the county goal.—Since the night on which Rose met my brother at Banstead, he has not been seen by any of us, but yesterday we received a letter from him, full of expression, of grief and contrition, stating that he was about to leave the country by a vessel which was on the point of sailing; and as the letter was posted close to the water-side, hopes may be entertained that he has not deceived us, and that in another clime he will recover the good name which he had irreparably lost in this.'

'Amen!' responded Ernest Montgomery, with heartfelt earnestness, while Rose gave vent to a long-drawn sigh, and her brother seemed much relieved by the termination of his narrative.

A few moments afterwards, Clinton left the room, and Rose and her lover were left alone.

'Let us now speak of ourselves, Rose, of our love and our hopes,' said Montgomery.

'Think you, Ernest, that your father suspects our attachment?' said Rose Clinton.

'I think not, dearest. If either of my parents suspected that I regarded you with a tender interest, I should assuredly have received intimation of their displeasure.'

'Had you not better mention your intention to your father?' said Rose, with a modest blush suffusing her lovely countenance.

'I shall do so,' returned Montgomery, 'but I feel that the application for his sanction will be useless, and therefore will not affect any arrangement that we may previously make. May I say this day fortnight?'

'Oh, that is so very sudden!' exclaimed Rose.

'Then name the day yourself, my dear Rose,' said her lover, 'but pray let it be early. Remember, that if my father sets his mind upon preventing our union, delay may be fatal to our hopes.'

'Then let us say this day month, should your father be violently opposed

to our union,' returned Rose; 'and if he should offer no objection, a felicitous circumstance which we can scarcely anticipate, the period can be lengthened or shortened as may be considered advisable.'

With the agreement that Montgomery should speak to his father at once on the subject, the lovers separated.

* * * *

Ellen Lee expected the return of Clinton about midnight, and she sat in her neat little chamber until long after that period, thinking of all that he had said to her, and indulging in the pleasing dreams of the delights of Paris, of fame acquired by her lover on the battle fields of the continent, and of a white-walled chateau in Provence or Languedoc surrounded with vineyards and olive groves. But her lover came not. She retired to a troubled rest, to awake in anger at the apparent neglect of Clinton. She was eating her breakfast when Hamilton was announced, who informed her of Clinton's arrest and escape, and all the circumstances which we have before related. But Hamilton avowed his belief to Ellen Lee, and said, indeed, that he had inquired and was convinced, that the Black Mask and young Clinton, of Cheam, were distinct individuals, that the latter had been mistaken for the former, and that the highwayman had left the country immediately after his daring escape from the magistrate's house at Banstead. There were two circumstances, which, above all others, invested this belief in his mind with the character of a moral certainty; the first was the improbability of such a notorious individual as the Black Mask obtaining his liberation under the circumstances attendant upon the release of Edwin Clinton; the second was the absence and silence of the Black Mask ever since the night of the burglary at Banstead.

'In conclusion' said Hamilton, 'our friend and the liberated prisoner are distinct persons, and the former is now in a foreign land.'

'I could not have believed that Clinton would have acted so,' observed Ellen, when Hamilton had brought his narrative to an end. 'I am under a great obligation to you, sir, for the trouble you have taken in the affair, and the sympathy which you have manifested in my behalf.'

'Pray do not mention it, madam,' said the highwayman. 'I am happy in having been enabled to serve you, and

by night or by day, my dear madam, you may always command the services of Fredrick Hamilton. Might I venture, madam, without incurring the imputation of exhibiting an improper curiosity, to inquire whether you have decided upon any course for the future?'

'You are acquainted with my position, Mr. Hamilton,' returned Ellen, without evincing either surprise or anger at the highwayman's question, 'and I have only to add to what you know that my constancy to Clinton has left me entirely without resources. He was not deserving the sacrifice,' she added, with a sigh, 'and I shall now consider myself at liberty to accept any eligible offer that I may receive.'

'May Frederick Hamilton presume to hope for the happiness of becoming the successor of the inconstant Clinton?' exclaimed the highwayman, rising from his chair and advancing towards Ellen, whose hand he took in his own. 'You will not find me less generous, or in any way less worthy of your love.'

'I did not expect this honor, Mr. Hamilton,' said Ellen Lee, smiling as she gently withdrew her hand from the fervid grasp of her admirer. 'You must allow me time to reflect, before I accept or decline the proposal with which you have honored me. You shall have my decision to-morrow.'

The morrow came, and with it, Ellen Lee became the mistress of Hamilton.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ABDUCTION.

ON the morning after his conversation with Rose Clinton, recorded in the twentieth chapter, Earnest Montgomery sought the presence of his father to obtain his sanction to his union with the blue-eyed sister of our hero. He declared his love and asked his father's approval.

'If you marry that girl at the Willows, Ernest, I will disinherit you, exclaimed the old squire, angrily.

'The dread of poverty, my dear father, will not deter me from acting in accordance with the dictates of honor, and the promptings of an earnest and unalterable affection,' returned his son, and, advancing to the door as he was speaking, he quitted the library.

For some time after he was thus left

alone, the old squire sat with his eyes fixed upon the ground, and with his forehead frequently corrugated as if with the workings of evil passions. At length he rose with the air of one who has arrived at some deperate resolution, and in a few minutes he quitted the Coppice, and walked across the fields towards the village of Cheam.

In a lane near the church of that place, there was at that time a cottage standing in a small garden, but both cottage and garden had a neglected and mean appearance.

On the squire rapping at the door, the low growling of a dog was heard within, and the head of a woman, surmounted by a very dirty cap, adorned with faded pink ribbons, appeared for a moment at the window.

'Sam,' said the woman, calling to the next room in a subdued tone, 'here's Squire Montgomery, Banstead justice.'

'The devil!' growled the rough voice. 'Has he got Davy Williams with him?'

'No,' replied the woman.

'Then let him in, and see what he wants,' returned Sam.

The door was opened, and the squire in the meantime knocked again, and the slatternly female dropped a low curtsy as the magistrate entered. The room was replete with evidences of discomfort, not of poverty precisely, but of a want of appreciation of the charms of domestic comfort and order. There was scarcely any furniture in the room, and two children, a boy and a girl, who were playing on the floor, were both ragged and dirty, but a double-barelled gun hung over the mantel-piece, a cheerful fire burned briskly upon the hearth, and a hare was roasting on a spit before it.

'I want to speak to your husband, Mrs. Buggins,' said the squire.

'Yes, sir,' responded the woman. 'Sit down, sir. Sam! Be quiet, Ponto!'

Beckoning the children to follow her, the woman left the room, and in a minute afterwards, a man about forty years of age entered from an apartment in the rear; his complexion was dark, his hair long, black, and matted, and his eyes dark and restless in their expression. He wore a dark velvet jacket and breeches, leather gaiters, and a blue silk handkerchief tied loosely round his hairy throat.

'Morning, squire,' said he, with an awkward bow.

'You cannot let the hairs alone, I see,' observed the squire.

'Why, you see, squire, a love of game runs in my family,' returned Sam Buggins, with an audacious *sang-froid*. 'But that partikler hare didn't come off your preserves, squire.'

'Well, I want you to do a job for me, Buggins,' said the squire, 'and if you will undertake it, I will pay you well, and deal leniently with you whenever you may be brought before me in future for poaching.'

'What is it, squire?—that's the first thing,' observed Sam Buggins.

'There is a young woman in this village whom I want removed out of the way of my son,' returned the squire. 'Do you think you could manage to carry her off into the west of England?'

'Who is she, squire?' inquired the poacher.

'Young Clinton's sister,' replied old Montgomery. 'If I take measures to insure her in this lane to-morrow evening at seven or eight o'clock, could you get a confederate to assist in carrying her off to Sidmouth?'

'What is the consideration to be, squire?' inquired Sam Buggins, after a moment's reflection.

'A hundred pounds,' replied the squire.

'It shall be done, squire,' exclaimed Buggins. 'Where are we to take the young woman to?'

'To the house of a Mr. Studley, near Sidmouth,' replied the squire. 'He will receive instructions from me before you get there. Here are twenty pounds earnest, and the remainder shall be paid when you return.'

Sam Buggins eagerly clutched the twenty-pound note which the magistrate placed on the greasy table, and then the latter took his departure from the poacher's cottage and returned to the Coppice.

Buggins at once arranged with a friend of his, named Bob Twitters, to have a hackney coach in the lane near the church on the following evening.

Early on the following evening Bob Twitter left the 'Red Lion' to meet his friend with the coach at Morton, and Sam Buggins stationed himself in the lane near the church to watch for the appearance of Rose Clinton. After waiting some time he saw the coach driven to the bottom of the lane, with Bob Twitters on the box, and then he began to be impatient for the appearance of the intended victim of Squire Montgomery's nefarious plot. At length he saw the young girl cross a stile which afforded egress from a meadow into the lane,

and look around her as if expecting to meet some one. The poacher walked quickly to the bottom of the lane, and cast a hurried but searching glance to the right and the left; no one was near the spot save his friend Twitters, and he turned down the grassy lane again.

There was an angle of the lane which, aided by a tree or two, enabled him to conceal himself; Rose was slowly approaching this spot—suddenly the poacher sprang upon her, and seized her in his powerful arms. A scream of terror burst from her pale lips, but the next moment a piece of sponge was thrust into her mouth, by which she was effectually gagged; and the poacher, lifting her from the ground, bore her towards the coach.

Bob Twitters jumped down and opened the door; the poacher placed the lovely girl, who had fainted from excess of terror, on the seat, and entering the vehicle himself, he removed the gag from her mouth, and sat down on the opposite side. Twitters closed the door, ascended to the box, gathered up the reins, and smacking his whip, away went the vehicle towards Kingston.

When Rose Clinton returned to consciousness she found herself in darkness, for the blinds were drawn up, and the semi-obscurity of the evening twilight was now deepening into the darkness of a winter's night. At first she was at loss to conceive her situation, but the past gradually returned to her mind on the wings of memory, and she recollected that she had gone to the lane near the church to meet Ernest Montgomery, agreeably to his wish expressed in a note she had received from him in the afternoon, and that she had there been seized by Sam Buggins, the poacher. The coach was proceeding at a rapid rate, but she had no means of ascertaining in what direction; a movement of the poacher told her that some one was with her in the vehicle, and though she knew not who it was, she resolved to question the person, and endeavor to move him or her in her favor.

'Whoever you are,' said she, in a trembling voice, 'pray tell me where you are taking me, and why I have been thus treated?'

'It's agin orders,' replied the poacher. 'I musn't answer no questions of that natur', but you needn't be afeared of ill-treatment, so make your life happy, young woman.'

'Happy!' repeated Rose, with an emphasis that was at once mournful

and bitter, and then she sank back upon the seat, and gradually fell into a profound reverie, as to who could be the author of the outrage.

Three days and nights they travelled forward. Rose Clinton in agony of mind and her abductors representing, at all the places where they stopped, that she was insane.

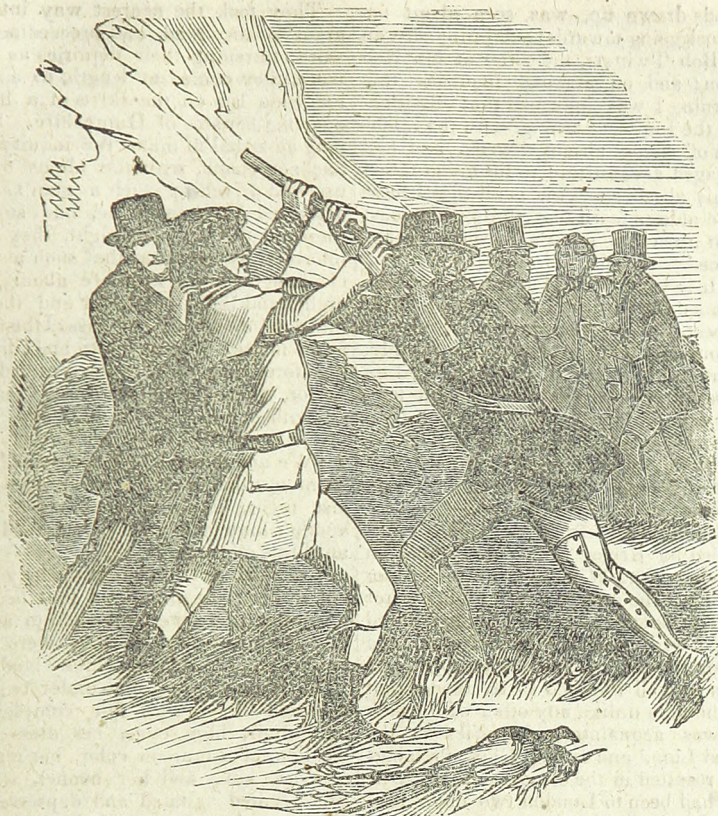
A journey to Exeter or York then occupied a longer period of time than would now suffice for a voyage up the Rhine as high as Basil in Switzerland. The reader need not, therefore, be surprised at the length of time which it took Bob Twitters and Sam Buggins to bring their prisoner to the neighborhood of Sidmouth.

On the evening of the third day the coach stopped in front of a large but dilapidated house, overgrown with ivy which festooned all the front windows with its dark green drapery, and afforded shelter to a numerous population of sparrows. Bob Twitters descended from the box, and knocked at the door, which was opened by an elderly woman, who glanced towards the coach, and said, 'Oh, you have brought the young woman, I suppose?'

'Yes, mum,' returned Twitters. 'I suppose you expected her?'

'Oh, yes!' replied the old woman. 'Mr. Montgomery wrote to my husband, informing him of all the particulars necessary to know.'

Twitters opened the door of the coach, and when Rose Clinton saw that the place at which it had stopped was not an inn, she rightly conjectured that she was now at her journey's end. The ostler assisted her to alight, and Sam Buggins followed; the old woman invited the party to enter, and while the horse picked the long grass of the lawn before the house, she introduced the poacher and his companion to her husband, and then conducted her unfortunate charge to a bed-room. Twitters and the poacher were supplied with bread and cheese and ale, and when they had satisfied their appetite they mounted the coach-box together, and drove to a little inn at a village a few miles distant, where they again indulged themselves with tobacco and ale, and gloated over the success of their nefarious scheme in which the squire had employed them, and in visions of happiness to be produced by the reward, passed the night, and on the following morning began their return journey to Cheam.



THE BLACK MASK AND THE GAMEKEEPERS.

We must now leave Rose Clinton for a time in the solitude of her prison chamber in the gloomy and dilapidated old mansion near Sidmouth, while we relate the incidents that occurred to those interested in her fate at Cheam and Banstead during the period that intervened between her abduction and her arrival at the house of Mr. Studley.

The discovery that his sister was missing, produced the greatest excitement in the mind of Clinton. On making inquiries, his worst fears, that foul means had been used, were more than realized. He immediately hastened to Banstead to take counsel with Ernest Montgomery.

'I hope nothing has happened, Mr. Clinton,' said Montgomery, after the first salutation.

'It grieves me to inform you, Mr. Montgomery,' returned our hero, 'that Rose has been absent from home since seven o'clock last evening, and I have

reason for believing that she has fallen into bad hands.'

'Good heavens! my Rose—but speak more explicitly, Mr. Clinton,' exclaimed Ernest, turning pale at the bare thought of the idol of his heart being exposed to outrage, and regarding our hero with the most painful suspense.

'Yesterday afternoon,' began our hero, 'Rose received your note—but was it written by you—because I was informed—'

'What note?' inquired Montgomery dreadfully agitated. 'No note was yesterday sent by me to your sister. It must have been the fabrication of some designing villain! But proceed, and pray be brief, for I burn for action.'

'Rose received a note purporting to have come from you, in which was expressed a wish that she would meet you near the church,' continued Clinton. 'She left home about seven o'clock, and has not returned. Late last night I learned that a hackney coach, with the

blinds drawn up, was seen about ten o'clock going towards Godalming, driven by Bob Twitters, the ostler at the Red Lion; and on making inquiries this morning I was informed that Twitters left the Inn last evening, with the intention of being absent a week, and had engaged a substitute to fill his situation in his absence. This is all that I have been able to learn that throws the least light upon my sister's mysterious absence.'

'It is very little, but more may be gleaned by further investigation,' said Ernest, rising from his chair. 'I will accompany you to the Willows, Mr. Clinton, to examine the note received by Rose, if she has left it there; and then we will proceed upon the supposition that she was in the coach driven by Twitters, and our investigations will probably either remove or confirm that impression.'

Clinton then left the Coppice, accompanied by Ernest Montgomery, and on arriving at the Willows farm, the former produced the note received by his sister the day before, and which he had found in her writing desk. Ernest examined it closely, but his own caligraphy had been so well imitated as to render that of the note unlike any other with which he was acquainted. Inquiries at the 'Red Lion,' and among Clinton's laborers, resulted in the discovery that Twitters had been to London two days previously, that before he went, and on his return, he had been in earnest conversation with Buggins, that the latter had also left Cheam on the preceding evening, and that a hackney coach, driven by Twitters, had been met between Cheam and Kingston, about eight o'clock. Feeble as the clue still was to the fate of the missing girl, Ernest and Clinton had no resource but to follow it, and they immediately set out upon their enterprise, and acting upon the assumption that Rose was in the power of Twitters and Buggins, or of some one of whom they, or, at least, the former, were the subordinate agents, they took the road to Kingston.

They stopped not until they reached Godalming, where they dined, and made inquiries concerning the object of their search. They could obtain no information at the principal Inn, and similar inquiries at every public-house in the main street of the place, being equally fruitless, they concluded that the coach had not stopped there, and pursued their journey.

They took the nearest way into the great western road, and proceeding onward, pursuing their inquiries as they went, they came, at length, to a small road-side Inn on the skirts of a heath, near the borders of Hampshire. Stopping as usual to make the inquiry if a hackney coach, with the blinds drawn up, and driven by such a man as they described Twitters to be, had stopped there on the previous night, they were informed by the ostler that such a vehicle had been put up there about midnight, and that the driver and the inmates of the coach had passed the night at the house. Montgomery and Clinton, therefore dismounted, and entered the parlor, where they desired to be supplied with some refreshment, and were presently joined by the landlord.

'We are informed by the ostler,' said Clinton, 'that a coach was put up here last night, and that the driver, with another man and a lady, remained here until this morning.'

'The driver told us that the lady was not in her right mind, and that he, and the other man, were attached to a private asylum, to which they were conveying her,' returned the landlord. 'The lady was young—under twenty, I should think, with fair complexion, light hair, blue eyes, her dress was woollen, of a maroon color, her mantle of black silk, and her bonnet, straw. She seemed agitated and depressed in spirits, and told us that she had been taken forcibly from her home, but we thought it only the false impression of a diseased mind.'

'The description is exactly that of the lady, of whom we are in search,' observed Montgomery. 'Which way did the coach go on leaving here this morning?'

'Towards Andover,' replied the landlord. 'I sincerely hope that you will overtake the rascals, and rescue the unfortunate young lady from their clutches.'

Clinton and Montgomery hastily despatched their dinner, and mounting their horses, rode towards Andover, confident now that they were on the right track.

They were doomed, however, to disappointment, for on reaching Sidmouth, the point to which they next directed their pursuit, they could find no clue to Rose. Disappointed and almost worn out with exertion, Clinton and Montgomery returned home.

CHAPTER X.

THE STEWARD AND THE SMUGGLER.

WE must now return to Rose Clinton, whom we left at the house of Mr. Studley, on the night when she was taken there by Sam Buggins and his confederate Twitters. Mr. Studley, we may here mention, had formerly been steward over an estate which Mr. Montgomery owned in the neighborhood of Sidmouth, consisting of the dilapidated mansion in which Rose Clinton was now a prisoner, the grounds attached to it, and a farm adjoining thereto. Having been detected by Squire Montgomery in several transactions relating to the sale of stock and agricultural produce which did not redound greatly to his credit as a man of integrity, he was deprived of his stewardship, and being unable, on account of the circumstances which had led to his dismissal, to obtain employment again in the same capacity, he had opened a chandler's shop in the little town of Sidmouth, but became insolvent, left the place, and disappeared for several years. At length he turned up again at Cheam, where he presented himself in a state of great distress to his former employer, and expressed the deepest contrition for his misconduct. The house at Sidmouth was unoccupied at the time, and as there was little hope of its speedily gaining a tenant, for reasons which will be hereafter made apparent, Squire Montgomery, believing in the sincerity of Studley's repentance, permitted him to take up his residence there, where he had remained ever since.

Rose had declined Mr. Studley's offer of refreshment, and she shuddered involuntarily as she heard the key turn in the lock, and glanced around the sombre and mournful-looking apartment to which she had been conducted. The chamber was large, and the feeble light of the rush taper with which Mr. Studley had provided her, only partially illuminated it. The ceiling was low and dingy, the windows narrow and covered with heavy curtains, and the wainscoted walls were hung with arras, which in some places was hanging in disorder, and in others had been nibbled by the rats. The little furniture which the chamber contained was of antique and massive construction, and its heavy and antiquated appearance aided the effect of the gloom and melancholy which pervaded the chamber.

Rose sat by the bed-side for nearly an hour, plunged in a mournful reverie, and then rousing herself from the fit of abstraction into which she had fallen, she had laid aside her garments, and retired to rest. It was some time before she fell asleep, for, in addition to the anxiety which racked her mind, there were other causes in abundance to keep her awake.

When she awoke a partial light filled the sombre chamber, and when she quitted her couch and drew the heavy curtains at the windows, the sunshine made visible the cloud of dust which she had raised by moving the long undisturbed hangings. She immediately dressed herself, and had scarcely done so, when Mrs. Studley unlocked and opened the door, and seeing Rose dressed, closed and locked it again, returning in a few minutes with her captive's breakfast.

'I hope you do not share the belief concerning me which was instilled at every place where we stopped by the villains who brought me here?' said Rose, with tears in her eyes, as she thought of her forlorn position.

'I know nothing about it,' replied Mrs. Studley. 'Our orders are to keep you safe but treat you kindly.'

Mrs. Studley then retired.

A few mornings, after Rose's arrival at the old mansion, Studley and his wife were at breakfast, when the postman brought the former a letter, in the superscription of which he had no difficulty in recognising the stiff, formal calligraphy of Squire Montgomery.

'What is it about?' his wife asked, with some impatience, when he had read through the epistle.

'Mr. Ernest has set out to discover where the girl has been taken to,' returned Studley, 'and he thinks it probable that he will come down here, knowing that his father has a house here; but I do not think that very likely, for he will not suspect the old man's complicity in the affair at all, and he has never been here at all. But if he should come into the neighborhood, my orders are precise and peremptory, to put her on board some smuggling craft, and send her to France. Abandoned there, without resources, and unacquainted with the language, she will find it very difficult to return to England; she will be as safe there as in America.'

Studley went, immediately after breakfast, to the town of Sidmouth, which was in the immediate neighborhood, and knocked at the door of

house at the bottom of a lane leading to the sea.

'Is Mr. Clayton at home?' he enquired of a young girl who opened the door.

'No, but I'll go and fetch him,' was the answer.

The young girl returned in a few minutes, accompanied by her father, a stout, bluff-looking seaman, who for many years had been the master of a small lugger, engaged in the contraband trade with France. He extended his hand to Studley as he entered, and when his daughter had quitted the room, which she did immediately, he looked keenly at him as if waiting to hear his business.

'Do you know any craft that will sail to-night or to-morrow morning, for France, Master Clayton?' inquired Studley.

'My own lugger will sail at nightfall,' replied the smuggler. 'Do you want a passage?'

'Not for myself, Ben,' returned Studley, 'but there is a young girl at my house whom I wish to send over. To tell you the truth, Ben, she was a servant in the household of a rich gentleman, in Surrey, that I am under some obligation to, and the gentleman's son fell deeply in love with her. In order to prevent him from marrying her, which the foolish young man declared his intention, the old gentleman sent her down to my old haunted house, up the road, where she has been in seclusion for some days. But the gentleman's son is searching about after her, and my instructions are to get the girl taken over to France, and, therefore, I want a passage for the young woman in your lugger.'

Ben Clayton smoked his pipe for some moments after Studley had ceased speaking, but at length he puffed out a huge volume of blue smoke, and said, 'Why can't you shut your eyes, and let the young man find out the girl, and marry her, if he be so minded?'

'Because I shall find it my interest to please his father,' replied Studley, 'and if he finds out the girl, the old man will perhaps consider me blameable. At any rate, if I take the step which will effectually separate them, my reward will be greater than if the scheme failed.'

'Well, you will pay a liberal fare, of course,' observed Ben Clayton, watching the blue smoke as it wreathed upward to the ceiling.

The sum which Studley offered removed the faint scruples of the smug-

gler, and the next step was to decide upon the course to be pursued to get the captive maiden on board the lugger. It was arranged, over steaming glasses of diluted *eau-de-vie*, that Mrs. Studley should allow Rose to walk with her at night-fall in the garden, from which the walk should be extended to a sequestered lane leading to the beach, where two or three of the lugger's crew were to be lying in wait, and on the appearance of Rose and the old woman, were to seize upon the former, and carry her to the boat, and convey her on board.

The nefarious compact being brought to a satisfactory conclusion, Studley left the dwelling of the smuggler, and returned to his own, to acquaint his wife with the manner in which her prisoner was to be disposed of.

Mrs. Studley asked Rose, about nine o'clock in the evening, to take a walk, to which Rose consented. After walking sometime, they turned the angle of a lane, and Rose beheld before her the broad expanse of the English channel, silvered by the moonbeams, and reflecting the clouds which scudded across the sky. A little to the right, the Chit Rock reared its lofty head, and threw its shadow upon the waves which chased each other toward the land; and far across the moonlit waters the Eddystone light, that invaluable beacon to mariners, and wonderful monument of human ingenuity and perseverance, shone like a distant star.

Rose had gazed but a moment upon the scene before her, when she heard a rustling in the hedge, and before she could turn to the spot from which it proceeded, two men, in the garb of seamen, sprang from their concealment, and seized her. She screamed loudly, but one of the men pressed his hand upon her mouth, and raising her in his arms, bore her towards the beach. Mrs. Studley disappeared immediately, but Rose was too much alarmed to notice her evident complicity in the outrage. Having carried her some distance, the smuggler set her down, and cursing her for the trouble her struggles gave him, gagged her with a handkerchief. Then he raised her again, and ran with her towards the beach, followed by his comrade; and having reached their boat, in which were two more of the lugger's crew, Rose was laid down at the bottom, having fainted at the moment they reached the beach, and then the two smugglers in the boat took up their oars, and pulled away from the shore.

The striking of the boat against the side of the lugger, which lay at a little distance from the shore, restored the unfortunate Rose to consciousness, and when she had been lifted up the side, the handkerchief was removed from her mouth, and Ben Clayton himself led her down to the cabin.

'Oh, why have I been brought here?' exclaimed the terrified girl, throwing a wild glance around. 'Is it to be murdered? or am I to be borne away from friends and home, never to see them more?'

'We are not murderers nor kidnappers, girl,' replied Ben Clayton, 'and as to friends and home, you will find them on the other side of the channel as readily as on this, if you only have money in your pocket.'

'But I am penniless, and how shall I be able to return to my native land?' returned Rose, bursting into tears. 'I shall never see again those who love me, and how shall a poor friendless girl find a home in a foreign land?' 'I do not know who you are, but I have never injured you; yet you have become an instrument in carrying out the evil designs of those who have already hurried me far away from my home.'

Ben Clayton felt himself unable to reply to this remonstrance; he felt a twinge of remorse in his heart as he looked on the tearful countenance of the lovely girl, and to escape from solicitations with which he could not comply, and appeals which would render him uneasy, he went on deck. The sails of the lugger were already spread to the breeze, which blew off the shore, and she glided over the moonlit waves with the graceful buoyancy of a swan.

Rose remained weeping in the cabin until Ben Clayton came down again, and, addressing her in a tone that he meant to be kind and conciliating, told her she might retire to rest in the cabin, without any fear or molestation, and that on the following day he should put ashore at Rochefort. He then retired, and Rose laid down without taking off her clothes, and wept herself to sleep.

When she awoke on the following morning she heard the rough voices of the smugglers on the deck, and, for a moment, she could scarcely comprehend her situation; but, by degrees, her memory retraced the incidents of the previous night, and rising from her couch, she went on deck.

When she returned to the cabin, she found that Ben Clayton had, in her ab-

sence, prepared breakfast, and she forced herself to take a cup of coffee and a small portion of ham, declining, however, the addition of brandy, which the smuggler strongly recommended, both by precept and example, and a vast improvement to the flavour of the exhilarating beverage prepared from the fragrant berry.

The bumping of the lugger against the quay aroused her from her reverie, and going upon deck she found the vessel moored alongside a wharf, with numerous others, and before the towers and spires of Rochefort rising above tall warehouses and a forest of masts. Cranes and tacks were creaking, sails flapped against the masts, and on every side rose a confused Babel of voices speaking many languages, in which might have been distinguished the French, the English, the Spanish, and the Dutch; on one side resounded the tramp of feet, as half a dozen tarry and bronzed seamen circled about the capstan, and on another the flowing canvas rose upon the masts to the monotonous and yet cheering sound of 'yo, heave, oh!'

'Now, miss,' said Ben Clayton, who was on the deck, turned to Rose, and pointing to the gangway which two of the crew were running out from the deck to the quay, 'you have only to take three steps, and you will be in France. My instructions only extend to landing you on the French coast; and when you leave my vessel you will be free to go wherever you please.'

'Will you carry back a letter for me, and post it immediately on your reaching England?' inquired Rose, eagerly, as the idea suddenly suggested itself.

'That will I gladly, miss,' returned the smuggler, with alacrity. 'There are no writing materials on board, but we can procure them at the first tavern; let me take you in tow, miss.'

Rose accepted the proffered arm of the smuggler, and they went ashore; entering the nearest tavern, they sat down in an apartment filled with the masters and mates of vessels in the harbour, and Clayton called for writing materials and a glass of brandy, for both of which he paid. Rose penned a brief epistle to Ernest Montgomery, which she enclosed in another for her brother, informing them of her situation, and the treatment which she had received since her abduction by Buggins and Twitters. This packet she entrusted to the smuggler, who undertook to post it

immediately on reaching Sidmouth, and then they left the tavern.

'Now what are you going to do?' inquired Ben Clayton, pausing in the narrow street, and regarding the maiden with an interest evinced in his countenance.

'Alas, I know not what to do!' returned Rose, with difficulty restraining her tears. 'I am both friendless and penniless, and unacquainted even with the language of the country.'

'Take these two guineas,' said the smuggler, slipping the glittering coins into the hand of the lovely girl, who received them with gratitude, and yet with a repugnance for which she could scarcely account. 'They will support you until you can hear from your friends; and, in the meantime, as you cannot speak the outlandish lingo of the mountseers, I will engage a lodging for you.'

Rose expressed her gratitude to the smuggler for his generosity, and his friendly offer, and, again taking his arm, accompanied her to a small street of private houses near the harbor, where, in the window of a house which was occupied, according to a small brass plate upon the door, by 'Madame Ponise, Milliner,' were two modish caps which looked as if they had stood on their wire-stands since the era of Louis XIV., and a written notice that there was a furnished chamber within, with which any respectable female could be accommodated on reasonable terms. Ben Clayton knocked at the door, which was opened by a slatternly servant girl, who, on learning his business, called Madame Ponise, a stout lady whose age was verging upon fifty, whose countenance bore the traces of former beauty, and present propensity for *eau-de-vie*, and who was well, but somewhat audily attired. She favored Rose with a scrutinising glance, which seemed completely satisfactory, and in a few minutes it was arranged that the maiden should become the tenant of the vacant chamber, a neatly-furnished apartment on the second floor, at a weekly rent of three francs. Ben Clayton then shook hands with his late passenger, in the most friendly manner, and when she had written on the outside of the letter to her brother, 'Madame Ponise, 7, Rue d'Eglise, Rochefort,' he took his leave, and returned to the lugger.

THE BOWER AND THE STILE.

LET us now return to the green valleys, and the heathly uplands, and the oak-clad hills of Surrey, where events occurred after the return of Clinton to Cheam, which demand our attention. Despite our hero's anxiety concerning his sister, a species of restlessness had come over him, even before he left Sidmouth, and it grew stronger and more impressive after his return to Cheam. The pursuits and occupations of rural life grew distasteful to him, gloom settled upon his brow, and discontent gnawed his heart, and there were moments when he would have plunged recklessly into the strife of battle, or welcomed the devastating tornado as a relief to the morbid feelings that were consuming him. He thought, with something like regret, of Ellen Lee, with whom he had had no communication since he parted with her on the night that he committed the burglary at the Coppice, in company with Frederick Hamilton. He knew not that she had become the mistress of Hamilton, he sometimes upbraided himself with inconstancy and cruelty towards her, and his desire to see her again and renew their former intimacy, increased also.

One evening—the evening on which Rose Clinton was seized by the smugglers—this desire became so irresistible that he mounted his horse, and rode towards the southern suburbs of the metropolis, determined to make his peace with Ellen Lee, and pass the night with her. But on reaching the house in which she had resided when he last saw her, he was informed that she had gone away, and the old woman of whom Ellen had rented the chamber in which we introduced her to the reader, could not inform him where she had removed to. Disappointed in the views and expectations which he had formed, Clinton mounted his horse, and rode to the celebrated 'Dog and Duck,' where he put up his horse, and entered the tea-gardens.

Notwithstanding the chilliness of the evening at that early season, many of the alcoves were occupied by jovial parties of burglars, highwaymen and gay clerks, dissipating their money with their mistresses. Clinton entered one of the bowers, called for some wine and a pipe, and was soon enveloped in

smoke. Presently he heard the voices of two persons in an adjoining alcove, which he recognized as those of Frederick Hamilton and Ellen Lee. Dashing down his pipe, he rushed forward and confronted his late mistress and her lover.

Ellen looked at him as if she was uncertain of his identity, doubtful whether she beheld Edwin Clinton or his twin brother, but her doubts were soon removed by the alacrity with which Hamilton, who never lost either his audacity or his presence of mind, sprung up and grasped Clinton's hand.

'My dear fellow, how do you do? sit down, and take a glass of champagne with us,' said the gay highwayman. 'Waiter, another glass?' and he handed it to Clinton, filled with the sparkling and effervescent juice of Epernay. 'You won't?' he exclaimed, as Clinton turned indignantly away; 'then the more fool you.'

Clinton turned quickly round at these insulting words, and struck the highwayman on the mouth with his clenched hand. With fiery countenance and gleaming eyes, Hamilton started from his seat, and drew his sword, for it was the custom at that period for every one who aspired to the character of a gentleman to wear such a weapon. Clinton stepped backward, and drawing his sword, which he had girded on for the occasion, wishing to pass for a gentleman when he visited places of common resort, he put himself in a posture of defence.

'Hold!' exclaimed Ellen Lee, rushing between her former and present lover, and restraining the latter by clinging to his arm. 'For heaven's sake, let there not be blood shed on my account! You were wrong to insult Mr. Clinton, Frederick; and you,' she added, turning to our hero, 'have only yourself to blame for the cause of quarrel.'

Clinton and Hamilton had both lowered the points of their weapons, when Ellen rushed between them, and the former now returned his to his scabbard, and walked slowly from the gardens.

'Why did you provoke him?' said Ellen Lee, in a tone of vexation, as she applied her snowy cambric handkerchief to her lover's bleeding lip.

'I did not think he would resent it so sharply,' returned Hamilton, sheathing his sword with a scowl of vexation and baffled rage upon his countenance.

'Did you know that he had returned to England?' inquired Ellen.

'Yes I met him a week ago at Banstead,' replied the highwayman, 'but I did not think it worth while to tell you that I had seen him.'

A doubt stole into the mind of Ellen Lee, even as she was speaking, as to whether Clinton had ever been out of the country at all; but she reflected that, however this might be, it did not alter the character of his behaviour towards her, and hence she felt no regret for the step which she had taken in transferring herself to Hamilton. She shortly afterwards quitted the gardens with the highwayman, and Clinton in the meantime was galloping towards Croydon.

Clinton, the next morning, rambled into the fields, where the fresh breeze of morning fanned his fevered brow, and the peaceful serenity of nature calmed, to a certain extent, the storm within. He sat down under an oak, on the bank by the side of a wheat field, where the hedge was beginning to put on the verdant livery of summer.—On the other side of the hedge was the cottage of Bob Twitters.

Clinton looked around and caught a glimpse of a small foot and well-turned leg as a girl stepped over the stile without observing him. Polly Twitters was a pleasant-looking girl, about sixteen years of age; her figure was robust, but not devoid of symmetry, and the voluptuous fullness of her bosom gave her an appearance of mature womanhood.

Her complexion was fair, and the roseate hue of health glowed upon her cheeks, but her forehead and nose were somewhat freckled; her hair was dark brown, and neatly and smoothly arranged, and her grey eyes were clear and bright. Her mouth was somewhat large, and the full red lips indicated a sensuous temperament, but her teeth were white and even, and when she smiled, the predominating expression of her countenance was far from unpleasant.

She walked quickly across the wheat-field, and in a few minutes she was followed by Clinton, who being taken with the appearance of the girl, determined to offer her a situation as servant in his house in order to get her in his power.

'Do you want a situation, young woman,' said Clinton, as he came up with her.

'Yes, sir,' returned Polly, almost trembling with hope.

'I want a servant,' said our hero.—'You appear younger than any that has

usually been kept at the Willows.—
How old are you ?

‘Sixteen, sir,’ replied Polly Twitters, casting down her eyes, for the attention with which Clinton regarded her, caused her embarrassment.

‘Could you come to-night ?’ inquired our hero.

The young girl hesitated for a moment but the fear of losing the opportunity by delay, quickly banished the repugnance she had felt of entering the service of a young and unmarried man, and she replied in the affirmative.

On reaching the Willows again, Clinton found a visitor there in the person of Robert Artuad, one of his old companions in vice, and whom he had not seen for a long time.

The two were soon seated together, with a bottle of brandy and pipes to keep them company.

‘Have you inherited a freehold, and retired from the road ?—or what else is the meaning of this seclusion from the world ?’ inquired Artuad, whose profession was that of strolling actor.

‘The story is too long,’ answered Clinton. ‘Let it suffice that I am here. Pass the bottle. Robert. Now tell us about yourself.’

‘I have adopted the stage as a profession,’ said Artuad. ‘Some day I will relate to you the singular vicissitudes of my life, but I am not in a mood for the relation at present. My father is well off—you know my father, Clinton ?—that queer old codger there at the Ivy house ?’

Clinton nodded assent.

‘Ah, he is a strange man !’ continued the player. ‘I never could make him out. He beats all my efforts to reckon him up. My wild course has deeply offended him, and I should not be surprised if he was to bequeath all his money to charities, not on account of the benevolent feelings of his heart, but just to do me out of it. I called upon him when our company came to Croydon, and he received me very coldly ; I tried to draw some money out of the old buffer, but not a mag could I get out of him. I might as well have tried to draw blood from a stone. I called again this morning, hoping to find him in a better temper, and—would you believe it, Clinton ?—the old boy absolutely refused to see me. But, I say—do you live all alone here ?’

‘My sister is my housekeeper,’ replied Clinton, ‘but she is not at home at present, and we usually keep a maid-

servant, but at present are without one.

‘I much doubt whether a maid servant will ever remain so long under the same roof with you, my worthy friend,’ said Artuad.

Clinton and his companion passed the rest of the day in playing cards, and left off in the evening, Clinton being the loser of nearly fifty pounds. Artuad then took his departure, with many professions of friendship for his old acquaintance, and Clinton was left to ruminate alone upon his losses.

Notwithstanding the state of semi-intoxication in which he was, he felt vexed at the extent of his losses ; but the arrival of Polly Twitters, with a bundle containing her limited wardrobe, roused him from the unpleasant reverie into which he had fallen, and he speedily shook off the remembrance of his heavy losses.

When the young girl had retired, elated and hopeful, to the kitchen of the farm-house, Clinton paced up and down the room for some time, as if revolving some scheme within his mind, for he often knitted his brow, paused abruptly, walked on again, looked from the window, and then at his watch, then sat down again, and again rose and continued his restless walk.

About an hour after midnight he desired Polly to go to bed, and shortly afterwards leaving the house, locking the door and taking the key with him, he saddled his horse and rode off towards Croydon.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BLACK MASK.

It was nearly midnight of the day on which Artuad visited the Willows, and on which Polly Twitters had become the servant of Clinton. Along the road leading from Croydon to Reigate, a horseman was riding in a southerly direction at a moderate pace. He seemed young, in stature rather above the middle height, and in frame athletic and well proportioned ; he wore a black riding-coat and boots, and his countenance was completely concealed by a black mask.

He rode at a gentle canter down the road, the wooded steep of Croham and the round heath-covered summits of the Addington hills, gradually growing dim and indistinct in the distance, and the

elevated juniper-clad downs of Sanderstead stretching away to the left, until he reached a small green, upon which a gibbet stood with hideous distinctness.

The masked rider reined his horse as he reached this spot, and gazed with mingled curiosity and horror upon the repellant spectacle.

Black and ghastly rose the tall post of the gibbet, mournfully swung the hoop-encased skeleton of the malefactor from its arms, blanched and grisly, cracking and groaning in the night wind as it hung like a scare-crow from its rusty chain.

While the masked horseman paused to gaze with mingled curiosity and horror upon the gibbet and its grisly appendage, his ears caught the sound of a horse's feet coming up the road, and he looked eagerly and earnestly in that direction.

A horseman was approaching at a trotting pace, and as he came nearer the individual in the Black Mask was enabled by the moonlight to perceive that he was stoutly framed and well attired. Without a moment's hesitation, the Black Mask drew forth a pistol, dashed at him like a charging cuirassier, and seizing his bridle with a firm grasp, caused the stranger's horse to rear up, and at the same time pointed the muzzle of his pistol at his breast, with the startling demand:

'Your money or your life!'

'Softly, lad!' exclaimed the stranger, without betraying the slightest trepidation. 'There are two words to that bargain,' and quickly drawing a pistol, he snapped it in the face of the masked robber.

The priming flashed, but the weapon remained undischarged, otherwise, the adventurous career of the daring highwayman would have been terminated there and then.

He laughed heartily at this mischance and shifting the grasp of his own weapon to the barrel, he struck the stranger so violent a blow upon the head with the stock, that he fell stunned from his horse. The animal started aside, and after looking for a moment at his fallen master, began to pick the herbage of the green.

The masked highwayman sprang lightly from his steed, and proceeded to rifle the pockets of the stranger, who lay stunned and insensible at the side of the road.

The stranger's pocket-book contained

no notes, but in a canvass bag the robber found twenty guineas, which he transferred to his own pocket; his watch he left untouched, and having satisfied himself that he was not dead, the highwayman mounted his horse, and rode rapidly towards Croydon.

Polly Twitters remained ignorant of the fact that her master had quitted the house after she had retired to rest, for she slept at the back, and knowing that she had left him up, she gave no attention to the slight noise which he made in going out, deadened as it was by the closed doors which intervened. Not hearing him come up stairs, and having noticed on her arrival that he had been drinking to excess, she thought he had fallen asleep down stairs, but the circumstance made no impression upon her mind, and she soon fell asleep.

She awoke suddenly, but what had thus aroused her, she for a moment knew not. The moon was still shining and her beams filled the chamber with a pearly lustre. The suddenness with which she had awakened, and the strange appearance of the room, so unlike that in which she slept at home, startled her; and before she was fully conscious of her situation, she heard footsteps in the passage into which the door of her chamber opened.

She immediately became impressed with the belief that thieves were in her house, and slipping out of bed, she threw a shawl over her shoulders, and listened with a beating heart at the door. The footsteps had ceased, and she took courage to draw the bolt of her door cautiously, and open it. She immediately beheld, standing close to her door, a man in a black over-coat and boots, holding a lantern in his hand, and having his countenance entirely concealed by a black mask.

Uttering a cry of terror, the affrighted girl fell insensible upon the floor, the shawl dropping from her shoulders, and leaving her bosom exposed to the gaze of the individual in the mask. When she recovered she was lying upon the bed, covered over with her shawl, and Clinton stood by her side in his trowsers and shirt only, holding to her nostrils a bottle of aromatic pungent salts. She blushed deeply as she recollected the situation in which he must have found her, and while she instinctively drew the shawl more completely over her bosom, she cast a shuddering glance around her chamber.

'Are you all right now?' inquired her master.

'Yes, thank you, sir,' she replied. 'Did you see that tall man with a black mask on?'

'No, I saw nothing,' returned Clinton, who seemed surprised at the question. 'I was awakened by hearing you scream, and, getting out of bed, I hurried on my trousers, and ran along the passage. I saw no one, and heard nothing after your scream and fall. I found you lying upon the floor, insensible, and immediately lifted you to the bed, and ran to Miss Clinton's room for her smelling bottle.'

'I heard some one in the passage,' said Polly, 'and got out of bed and opened the door to call you, thinking there was thieves in the house; but I saw a tall man in a black mask standing close to the door as soon as I opened it, and I dare say I screamed loud enough, for I always do when I am frightened.'

Clinton smiled, and not to embarrass the young girl by remaining any longer than necessary in her chamber, he wished her good night, saying that he would go down stairs, and examine the doors and windows, and left the room, closing the door behind him. Polly Twitters then tucked herself under the clothes again, to reflect, before falling asleep, upon the disagreeable incident which marked the first night beneath a strange roof. She heard Clinton descend the stairs, and in a few minutes, he ascended them again, tapping at her door, to assure her that all was right below, and, wishing her good night again, returned to his own chamber.

CHAPTER XII.

THE COMPACT OF ILLICIT LOVE.

THE next night after the occurrence narrated in our last chapter, Clinton had desired his servant, Polly Twitters, not to sit up for him, as he would not be home until late, but the young girl had taken a book from the parlor to wile away an hour before retiring to rest, and so deeply had she become absorbed in a tale of thrilling interest which it contained, that she did not lay it aside until she had read to the end. It was then past midnight, and she began to be apprehensive that the intruder of the preceding night, baffled on that occasion, would again visit the farm house, and as the tendency of the tale which she had

been perusing was to raise up imaginary terrors, she began to wish for Clinton's return. Weary of sitting up, however, and, beginning to feel a strong inclination to fall asleep, she at length went up to her chamber, and began to undress.

At this juncture, Clinton reached the Willows, and by the light in Polly's chamber, he knew that she was not yet in bed. Having put his black mare in the stable, he let himself into the house, and though Polly Twitters had heard the sound of the mare's feet in the yard, she had been so much alarmed by the masked apparition in the passage on the preceding night, that she judged it prudent to ascertain if it was really her master who had just entered the house. She accordingly opened the door of her chamber, and, stepping along the passage, called from the head of the stairs, 'Is that you, sir?'

It happened that Clinton was close to the foot of the stairs as she spoke, and glancing upwards instantaneously, the glimpse which he obtained of the young girl in chemise, with the light of the candle glimmering upon her white arms and bosom, fell, like a spark upon the mine of craving desires that was ever ready to burst forth. Polly Twitters sped back to her chamber the moment she beheld her master, scarcely hearing his affirmative reply to her question, and, having fastened the door, she extinguished the light, and got into bed.

For some moments, Clinton allowed his imagination to dwell upon the glimpse which accident had afforded him on two successive nights of the virgin charms of Polly Twitters, and then he ascended the stairs. Placing his hand upon the lock of the door of the young girl's chamber, and finding it secured on the inside, he felt disappointed, though it was a contingency which he might have expected, and proceeded to his own chamber.

In a few minutes silence reigned throughout the house; Clinton was in bed, where he had soon fallen asleep, and that silence remained unbroken, save by the striking of the clock, as hour after hour flew onward with noiseless and untiring wings, until it struck four. Then the door of Polly's chamber was opened, and the young girl came into the passage in her night-dress, and descended the stairs; she had been awakened by the striking of the clock and had quitted her bed to ascertain if the

hour which it announced was four or five.

Clinton was lying awake when the clock struck, and hearing Polly Twitters open the door of her chamber, he slipped out of bed, and peered forth, into the passage. Through the dim light of early morning he again beheld the young girl gliding along the passage, owing at that moment so little of her attractions to art, and he was forced to own the truth of the line that has grown into an aphorism—

"Beauty unadorned 's adorned the most."

Polly Twitters disappeared within her chamber, but she did not fasten the door; Clinton glided noiselessly along the passage, and opening it, presented himself, only partially dressed, before the astonished girl. She started, and uttered a faint scream, and then, while a blush stole over her face and neck, she inquired what he wanted. Clinton replied only by catching her in his arms, and kissing her, his audacious hand intruding at the same time upon the privacy of her snowy bosom, which was only partially concealed.

'For shame, sir,' exclaimed Polly, blushing and endeavoring to extricate herself from Clinton's embrace. 'Let me alone, Mr. Clinton, and go away.'

'How can I let you alone, when you look so provokingly pretty?' returned Clinton, again pressing his lips to those of the blushing and struggling girl.

'If you don't, I'll scream!' exclaimed Polly in an indignant and threatening tone.

Clinton smiled at her anger, and attempted to force her toward the bed, upon which she realized her threat by screaming loudly.

'Foolish girl!' said Clinton, in a tone of mingled vexation and contempt as he released her for fear her cries should reach the ears of some peasant going early to his labors. 'What did you make such a noise for, you silly girl!'

'Why did you behave so to an unprotected girl, sir?' retorted Polly, coloring both with indignation and the instinctive modesty of her sex, as she hastily drew over her bosom the white folds of her night dress, which the rude hand of her master had disarranged.

'Well, say that you will forgive me, Polly,' returned Clinton, 'and I will leave you.'

'I will promise nothing until you leave the room, sir,' said the young girl, and I shall leave the house directly.'

'By so doing you will expose both

yourself and me,' observed Clinton. 'Promise me not to leave hastily, and I will not molest you any more.'

'Well, I will promise that, sir,' said Polly Twitters, 'and now leave me.'

Clinton did leave her, but he had not relinquished his purpose; and hoped yet to accomplish it.

'Polly,' said he, when she placed the supper on the table in the evening, 'as you may, perhaps, want a little money to buy clothes, I shall pay you a quarter's wages in advance.'

'Thank you, sir,' said Polly, taking up the two sovereigns which Clinton placed upon the table.

'And I shall add a sovereign as a present, on account of my rudeness this morning,' continued Clinton, putting another sovereign into the young girl's hand.

'You are very kind, sir,' murmured Polly Twitters, casting down her bright eyes.

'I wish you would be kinder, Polly,' observed Clinton, sighing; and then taking her hand, he added, 'You have not yet assured me of your forgiveness.'

'Oh, I forgive you freely, Mr. Clinton,' returned Polly, averting her countenance to which a slight blush had mounted.

'Seal your forgiveness with a kiss, then. You have not forgiven me, I see,' he added, drawing her towards him, and attempted to kiss her.

'Have done, then,' said Polly, as, finding there was no other means of escape from him, she presented her cheek to his salute.

Polly returned the kisses which Clinton lavishly imprinted on them.

He then released her, and she returned to the kitchen to meditate upon what had passed between them. She could not think of leaving now that she had accepted a quarter's wages in advance, the amount of which was, moreover, more than she had expected; and all that passed since daybreak wore undeniable indications that her master was enamored of her. Her affections were free, Clinton was a handsome young man, and the young girl's moral training, as the reader may suppose, had not been of the highest order. The present of the sovereign had considerably softened her heart towards Clinton, and though the prospect of becoming his wife never entered into her meditative calculations, she thought of all that had passed between them until a strong feeling in his favor stole insensibly and yet rapidly upon her.

In this frame of mind she was retiring to her chamber, a few minutes after her master, when the latter, coming out of his room on purpose, encountered her in the passage.

'Good night, sir,' she said, opening her bed-room door.

'Kiss me again, Polly,' said Clinton, catching her by the arm and passing his own round her waist.

'For shame, sir,' said Polly, blushing and averting her head; but Clinton took the candle from her, placed it on the floor, and pushed her gently into the room.

'Remember your promise, sir,' said the young girl, struggling faintly with the libertine.

'Forget that, Polly, and hear me make another,' returned Clinton, seating himself on the bed by her side, and holding her hands in his own. 'You must see that I love you, and that I am determined to possess you; and the promise I offer you as a substitute for the one I made you this morning is, everything that love or money can procure, if you will give yourself to my arms.'

'Oh, what shall I say,' exclaimed Polly, in a hesitating and embarrassed tone. 'Give me time to consider, I don't know what I ought to say.'

'Say that you agree to the terms of the compact of love that I have proposed, my dear Polly,' said Clinton, folding her in his arms, and eagerly kissing her lips and glowing cheeks. 'Let this be an earnest on my part, and let a kiss ratify the compact on yours,' he added, as he drew forth a purse worked for him by Ellen Lee, and thrust it into the young girl's bosom.

Polly's eyes caught the glitter of three or four sovereigns through the silken meshes, and as the lips of our hero again sought her own she gave the kiss which he required as the sign of her adhesion to the compact. She had now gone too far to retreat, and she passively allowed him to lead her to his own chamber, where she surrendered herself to his embraces, and the compact of illicit love was consummated.

* * * *

The day following the night which Clinton passed in the arms of Polly Twitters, Ernest Montgomery overheard a conversation between his father, Squire Montgomery and Sam Buggins, in which he learned the hand that both had had in the abduction of Rose Clinton. He immediately followed Buggins, after the conversation was ended, and by threat-

ening to have him arrested, made him disclose the fact that Rose had been carried off to Sidmouth and confined there.

As fast as panting horses could carry him. Montgomery hastened again to Sidmouth and drove direct to the old house occupied by his father's steward, Studley.

'To what are we indebted for the honor of this visit?' said Studley, as he admitted and recognized Montgomery to be the son of the old squire.

'To the discovery by me of a vile plot against the peace and happiness of a young lady who has been forced from her home by villains,' and brought to this house, Mr. Studley,' replied Ernest, sternly, as he entered the hall.

'This house, sir?' repeated Studley, trembling visibly as he closed the door.

'To this house,' echoed Montgomery. 'All the intricacies of the nefarious transaction are known to me, and therefore it will be useless for you to affect ignorance of it.'

'You are mistaken, sir,' returned Studley. 'I can assure you most solemnly that there is no young lady in this house.'

'Then she has been removed,' exclaimed Ernest, 'for I am satisfied that I have not been deceived by false information. But I will search the house and ascertain for myself whether you are speaking the truth.'

'I don't know why you should doubt my solemn asseveration, Mr. Montgomery,' said Studley, with the air and tone of injured innocence.

Ernest said no more, but proceeded to search the house, in which investigation the old man attended him. The search was fruitless, but so satisfied was Montgomery, from what the poacher had told him, and from what he had overheard between Buggins and his father, that Rose had been confined in the house, that he became convinced that she must subsequently have been removed. But to interrogate Studley was useless, and he could take no judicial proceedings against him without apprehending Buggins; he therefore resolved to take time for consideration before adopting an extreme course, and accordingly intimated to Studley his intention of passing the night at the house. The old man offered no objection, and after partaking of supper with him and his wife, he was conducted to the bed-chamber which had been the prison of his beloved Rose.

He was pacing his chamber, an hour

after he had retired, cogitating upon the hitherto fruitless result of his second journey to Sidmouth, when the thought struck him that, as the shutters of the library windows were closed, and he had not advanced beyond the threshold of that apartment, there might be some door there, he had not observed. He immediately resolved to institute a strict search in the library during the night, unknown to Studley and his wife; and with this view, he waited impatiently until midnight, and then noiselessly opened the door of his chamber, and descended the stairs.

The library door was looked, but in the kitchen he found the key hanging on a nail near the fire-place. It was very rusty and turned with difficulty in the lock, but the door was at length opened and the young man entered the library. Pitchy darkness prevailed in the long gloomy apartment, but by opening the shutters, however, a flood of moonlight was poured into the library.

No door, however, could he discover, and he was about to close the shutters again, and retire to his chamber, when he heard a strange noise beneath the floor. He stood still and listened, and distinctly heard the sound of foot-steps, apparently in the act of ascending a ladder. Struck by the singularity of the sounds, and finding that they came nearer, as if rising from the foundation of the house towards the floor of the library, he retreated into the darkest corner of the room, and resolved to await the issue.

In a few moments he heard a grating sound, such as would be caused by the drawing of a bolt, which evidently came from immediately beneath a portion of the floor, fully illuminated by the flood of moonlight which streamed upon it through the windows, while the corner in which he stood was involved in cimmerian gloom.

The grating sound was followed by the raising of a trap-door in the floor, through which the light of a lantern flashed upward, and in a moment after the head of a man appeared.

Ernest was startled by the strangeness of the circumstance, but stood motionless in his corner, watching the movements of the apparition from amid the darkness.

The head turned round, and as the moonbeams fell upon the weather-beaten countenance, Ernest could discern an expression of wonder at the shutters being open.

'What means this?' said a voice that proceeded from the head with the weather-beaten countenance. 'The shutters open—and by Davy! the door too. I must see what it means. Hold hard, Bill.'

The last words were apparently addressed to some one below, and were no sooner uttered, than the head was followed, first by the shoulders, and then by the entire body of a stout-built man, in the garb of a mariner. The intruder advanced towards the door, but before he reached it, Ernest Montgomery sprang upon him from his concealment, and by a sudden and violent exertion of strength, succeeded in throwing him to the floor.

'Silence, villain! or you are a dead man,' exclaimed Ernest, in a low stern tone; but the sound of the man's fall had been heard below, and another head appeared through the trap.

The sight of his comrade in the power of Montgomery, however, caused him to vanish with some precipitation, and not knowing what assistance his prisoner might be able to command, Ernest called aloud—

'Help, Studley!'

The man whom he had seized struggled desperately to escape, but Ernest sat his right knee upon his breast, and held him firmly until the arrival of Studley.

The old man seemed alike surprised, bewildered, and alarmed, and looked first at Montgomery, and then at the prisoner, as if he could not comprehend the scene.

'Bring me a rope, and my sword and pistols, Studley,' exclaimed Ernest.—'Quick man!—do not stand and stare, but move!'

Studley obeyed, but with a slowness which excited a suspicion in the breast of Montgomery that he was in some way connected with the intruder. During his absence the prisoner renewed his attempts to escape, and called lustily for Bill, Mat, and Jack, but no one came to his assistance, and Montgomery held him fast.

When Studley returned with a rope and weapons, Montgomery passed the former several times around his prisoner's body, passing it over his arms, and thus securing them to his side. He then tied the other end of the rope securely around the man's legs, and ordering Studley to fetch the constable, he mounted guard until the old man returned with one. Consigning the cap-

tive to the custody of the constable, who immediately recognised him as Ben Clayton, the smuggler, he desired him to give information of the affair to the officer of the coast guard at Sidmouth, and to convey to the functionary his request that assistance might be sent him to institute a search.

Ben Clayton was securely lodged in goal, while Montgomery further searched the house, and discovered that Clayton was a wholesale smuggler, and that a cavern under the house was the place where he deposited his goods.

The next day Ben Clayton made a confession to Montgomery, in which he informed him that he had left, (as our readers are already aware,) Rose Clinton at the house of Madame Ponise, Rue d'Eglise, Rochefort. Clayton made this confession on condition that Montgomery should not appear against him, for smuggling. The confession having been made, Ernest Montgomery left the cell, and in a few hours, was on his way to Rochefort in a small vessel belonging to the little port of Sidmouth. Ben Clayton was taken before the magistrates in the course of the day, but, in consequence of the non-appearance of Montgomery, he was discharged.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAPTURE OF THE BLACK MASK.

LEAVING Ernest Montgomery for a brief space, we must return to the hills and heaths of Surrey, and introduce the reader to the parlor of the 'Horse and Groom,' situate at the upper or northern extremity of the quiet village of Streatham. It was on the night of the day on which Ernest Montgomery returned to Banstead from his unavailing search after Rose Clinton, and, as it was growing late, most of the customary frequenters of the house had departed for home, and only the landlord and two or three of the more hard-headed farmers of the village remained seated by the fireside, smoking long pipes, and often applying their lips with undiminished zest to foaming mugs of ale.

'Well, I be for home, neighbors,' said one of the farmers, rising.

'Don't go yet, Master Barnfield,' said one of his neighbors. 'I be going the same way, you know, if you will stay a little longer. Sit down, and have another mug of ale, man.'

'No, I'll ha' no more,' returned Barnfield, and he was going towards the door, with footsteps less even than they might have been, when a scuffle was heard in the bar, and, in another moment the door was dashed violently open.

Two men were then seen upon the threshold, one of them, whose hat had had been knocked off in the scuffle, and now lay on the floor, being held in the grasp of the other, and struggling desperately to escape. The man without the hat was tall and well-proportioned, and wore a green riding coat, cut in the style approved by sporting gentlemen of that period, a buff waistcoat, white cord smalls, and top-boots; he held in one hand a silver mounted riding whip, but his arms were held in a firm grasp by his assailant, and he had no power to use it in his defence. The other was an older and stouter man, and more plainly clad in a black coat and waistcoat, and drab breeches and gaiters.

'Holloa!—what's the matter?' exclaimed the burly, red-faced landlord, jumping up.

'A highwayman!' cried the assailant of the two strangers. 'He robbed me the other day down at Gibbet Green.—Run for a constable, somebody—oh, you cannot escape now, villain!'

'Let me go!' exclaimed the other, in an excited manner. 'You are mistaken, indeed. I never saw any of you before.'

'Here, Bob, fetch Miles Long, the constable,' said the landlord. 'Hold him tight, sir!—a daring villain, I warrant.'

The young man still continued to struggle, and at length, by a desperate effort, he succeeded in freeing his right arm, but scarcely had he raised it to strike his captor to the ground, than Farmer Barnfield seized it, and between the two he was held securely until the arrival of the constable.

'I charge this man with robbing me on the king's highway,' said the stranger.

'When and where was the robbery committed, sir?' inquired the constable.

'Four nights ago, at Gibbet Green, just below Croydon,' was the stranger's reply.

'The charge is false,' exclaimed the accused. 'I am a farmer at Cheam—my name is Clinton, which cannot be unknown here.'

'You may be one of the sons of old Clinton at the Willows,' observed Far-

mer Barnfield, 'but which of 'em?—that's the rub. They say that Master Clinton had two sons—twin brothers, and that one of them committed the robberies which were attributed at one time to the other, who occupies the farm left him by the old man.'

Miles Long then proceeded to search Clinton, and in one of the pockets of his coat, he found a black mask, which the stranger identified as the same which had been worn by the man who had robbed him. The highwayman now maintained a dogged silence, and the expression of his countenance was gloomy and stern.

'I must lodge the prisoner in the round-house for to-night,' said the constable, 'and in the morning he will be taken before the justice, when you will please be in attendance, sir.'

'Certainly,' returned the stranger.—'I live at Brixton, and my name is Broadhurst. But are you not going to handcuff the prisoner?' he added. 'He will surely escape, if you do not, as he did from Banstead round-house.'

'We have only one pair of bracelets, and I took them to the smith's to be repaired only this evening,' returned Miles Long. 'But I will chain him to the wall tie his hands, and direct a watch kept upon him.'

He took a cord from his pocket, with which he bound the prisoner's wrists together, and led him from the house, directing the landlord to take care of the black mare until the morning. Locking his arm in that of the prisoner, the constable led him towards a cottage nearer to the village, where he stopped to obtain a lantern, and then proceeded towards the round-house, which stood near the church, at a point whence two roads branch off from the main London road, one of them leading to Tooting, the other to Mitcham.

Setting down the lantern, and keeping one arm linked in that of his prisoner, Miles Long took the key of the round-house from his pocket, and unlocked the door. He then drew the prisoner inside, closed the door, and locked it; in order to prevent any attempt at evasion. In the wall was a staple, to which was attached a chain, having at its other end a padlock; he secured the chain around the prisoner's right leg with the padlock, which he locked with a key which he took from his pocket, and then he took up the lantern to depart.

'You won't be lonely here,' said he, 'for there's lots o' rats.'

'Rats!' exclaimed Clinton. 'I have a mortal horror of rats; could you not leave the lantern with me to scare the vermin away?'

'Well, if you are afraid of the animals you may have the lantern,' returned the constable, setting it down again. 'There's no rule against letting a prisoner have a light that I know of, barring he is drunk. Good night to you.'

'Good night!' responded Clinton, and then Miles Long quitted the cell, and locked the iron-bound and nail-studded door upon the prisoner.

No sooner had the door of the round-house closed upon him, than Clinton began to work his hands and wrists until he loosened the cords that bound them. He then lifted the lantern to his knees with his fingers, and holding his bound hands over the flame, burned the cord until it snapped asunder and set his hands free. He then drew on the staple to which his chain was fastened, and with its pointed end, he commenced to pick a hole in the wall. At the back of the round-house he knew there was a blacksmith's forge, and if he could only get into it, his escape was certain. Hour after hour he worked on steadily and at last made the hole large enough and passed through it into the shop.

Mounting upon the fire-place, he cautiously removed a couple of tiles from the roof, and then clinging to the rafters, he drew himself up, passed through the aperture, and after glancing hastily on every side, and listening attentively, without seeing or hearing anything to excite his fears, he crawled down the low and sloping roof of the smithy, dropped lightly to the ground. The night was dark, and therefore favorable to his escape; and darting across the road, he broke through a hedge and entered a plantation, skirting the western side of the road to Mitcham.

He reached the Willows in safety.

* * * *

In the days in which we are writing, and, indeed, long afterwards, a narrow dirty lane of notoriously evil repute, extending from the north western angle of West Smithfield to Field Lane, was called Chick Lane; and the evil notoriety of the locality was as much greater then than now, as that of Jack Sheppard or Dick Turpin is greater than that of the burglar or footpad of the present day. The city improvements in this locality have led to the demolition of the centre, and part of the western extremity, and

light being let in upon it, much of the moral darkness, which had clung for a century and a half to the place,* has vanished with that which was material. The 'Red Lion' tavern, the resort of all the most notorious criminals of London, from the days of Jonathan Wild down to those of Jerry Abershaw, has been pulled down; and the hand of improvement has laid bare to the public eye its strange mysteries, its sliding panels, its revolving fire places, its trap-doors, its secret passages, and its gloomy vaults. But in the days when highwaymen wore laced coats, and carriages, as well as pedestrians were waylaid and robbed by footpads in Lincoln's Inn Fields, Chick Lane was in the zenith of its notoriety, and the seat of a population as far removed by habits, manners, language and occupation from those of the contiguous streets, as the Red Indians of America from the civilised descendants of the European colonists.—Drunkenness, ribaldry, and obscenity were in its characteristics; the houses were all taverns, brothels, or receptacles of stolen property; the only occupations pursued there were such as were necessary to the criminal, or ministered to vice and depravity; and the women, and even the female children, with very few exceptions, were prostitutes. Obscene songs, and laughter, and fierce oaths resounded there from noon until long after midnight; not a lamp glimmered from one end of the lane to the other, and when darkness settled over it, crime and depravity were installed in joint sovereignty, and with the riot of an abominable Saturnalia there mingled the screams of women, the victims of drunken brutality, and cries of 'help,' and 'murder,' proceeding from men who had been lured by women to their vile dens, and there robbed, and, in case of resistance, mercilessly maltreated.—Nor was this all; often there rose from this horrible lane above the confused riot of the midnight orgies, the death-shriek, wrung by terror and despair, from the pale lips of the assassin's victim, as he was plunged into the black current of the Fleet ditch.

A few nights after the capture and arrest of Clinton at Streatham, he, in company with Artuard and Hamilton, entered the drinking room of the 'Red Lion' in Chick Lane. The apartment was long, and lighted by candles stuck in iron branches, projecting from the dingy walls, which were adorned in many parts with grotesque heads, and

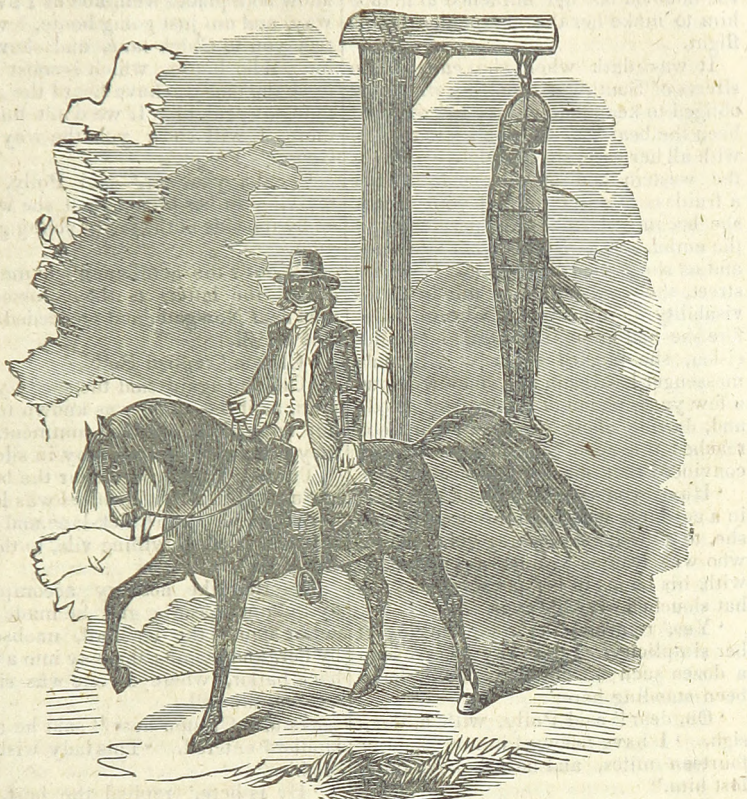
representations of gibbets drawn with charcoal. A bench or settle ran round the room, and down the middle and both sides were ranged a number of narrow tables, forms being placed on the outer sides of the tables for the extra accommodation of the numerous guests. Round the tables were seated a number of persons of both sexes, with crime and profligacy legibly stamped upon the countenance of each; the men were highwaymen, footpads, burglars, pick-pockets, and coiners, and the females were their mistresses and the loose women of the locality. Some of the latter were seated on the knees of their companions, and here and there pipes were seen in the mouths of young woman as well as in those of the men. Some were playing at cards or dominoes, others were throwing dice, and the deep curses of the losers mingled at intervals with the loud laugh, the coarse joke, and the boisterous chorus of the bacchanalian song.

'This is indeed a scene to be witnessed no where else,' said Robert Artuard, in a whisper to Clinton, as they glanced round the room before sitting down.

The highwayman and his companions were supplied with pipes and brandy and water, and the former nodded familiarly to two or three of the thieving fraternity by whom he was recognised.

Two hours passed away rapidly; songs were sung, stories of successful crime were related with as much zest, as if they were relations of the most meritorious acts, and the drinking and smoking went on until all were more or less intoxicated, and a thick haze hung over the scene, through which the un-snuffed lights glimmered feebly, like lanterns seen through the gloom of a foggy night. The conversation became more boastful, more profane, and more obscure; the laughter grew louder; the restraints of decency were utterly cast off. We leave them in their carouse.

In the meantime Polly Twitters waited for the coming of Clinton at the Willows. He came not, but a pale, cunning-looking lad brought a note to the Willows, which she found was for herself, and from Clinton. It stated, in a few words, that circumstances had occurred which rendered it improbable that he would be able to return again for some time, but that he would do so as soon as he could with safety, if only for an hour, and in the meantime, had sent



THE HIGHWAYMAN UNDER THE GIBBET.

ner a ten pound note, which was enclosed in the letter.

Polly Twitters had surrendered herself to Clinton not so much from any influence which he had obtained over her heart, as from the latent sensualism of her nature, and constitutional warmth of temperament, which he had roused into activity, and the temptations which he had spread before her to allure her from the path of virtue. But the tender nature of their connexion had gradually caused a feeling of a warm affection for her seducer, to spring up in her heart, and she therefore read his letter to her with a deep anxiety concerning the causes of his detention in London.

The contents of the note revived in her mind all that she had heard of the suspicion which had been attached to Clinton a few months before, and made her suspect that he was really the mysterious robber, called the Black Mask. If this was the case, the cause of his absence was, without doubt, the danger

in which he stood of being captured and detected, and, perhaps, in the extremity of this danger, he would fly from the country, and she would never see him more.

All this rushed rapidly through her mind, much more rapidly than it can be read, and hastily putting on her bonnet and shawl, she locked up the house, and walked quickly towards Sutton. She soon gained upon the lad who had brought the letter from Clinton, as she disbelieved the assertion he had made, in answer to a question which she put to him, that he did not know where Clinton was, she resolved to follow him at a distance, and endeavor, by that means, to discover her paramour's retreat. If Clinton fled from the country, she was determined not to remain at Cheam, to become a by-word to all the girls of the village, whose chastity remained unsullied, or who possessed art enough to conceal their deviations from it, and if she could find out her seducer,

she doubted not her influence to induce him to make her the companion of his flight.

It was dark when she entered the streets of Southwark, and she was now obliged to keep closer to the lad who had been the bearer of Clinton's letter; yet, with all her care, she lost sight of him at the western end of Cheapside. After a fruitless attempt to find him again, she became alarmed and perplexed by the embarrassing nature of her situation, and as she turned slowly into Newgate street, she revolved in her mind the advisability of returning to Cheam. Before she had brought her mind to a decision, she fancied she saw Clinton's messenger looking in at a shop window, a few yards ahead of where she stood; and, darting along the street, she soon reached the spot, but only to become convinced that she had been mistaken.

'Have you seen a pale-looking lad, in a corduroy jacket, go this way?' said she, to a dissipated-looking young man, who was leaning against a lamp-post, with his hands in his pockets, and his hat slouched over his eyes.

'Yes,' returned the man, smiling at her simplicity, 'I dare say I have seen a dozen such in the hour that I have been standing here.'

'Oh, dear!' said Polly, with a deep sigh. 'I have followed him a dozen or fourteen miles, and now I have quite lost him.'

'Do you want to see where he lives or to find out some one?' inquired the man, who, perceiving the girl's simplicity and inexperience, conceived the idea of profiting by it in more ways than one.

'I want to find a gentleman from whom the lad brought me a letter,' returned Polly, 'and I have no idea at all of where he lives.'

'Do you know the man?' said the seedy individual.

'Oh, yes—well!' answered Polly Twitters.

'Did you ever hear him speak of any place in London?' said the man. 'Because that might be a clue to find him out by.'

'I have heard him speak to a gentleman whom he knows, of the "Dog and Duck," and about a public house—a very bad place, I fear—in Chick-lane,' replied Polly.

'Oh, oh,' said the seedy man, in a musing tone. 'The first place is in St. George's Fields—over the water, and Chick-lane is not far from here. I

know both places well, and as I live that way, and am just going home, I will direct you to Chick-lane, and show you the public house, which is most likely to be the one you have heard the gentleman to speak of. If we don't find him there, I will show you the way to St. George's Fields.'

'Thank you, sir,' said Polly, hope reviving in her breast, and she walked on by the side of the seedy young gentleman.

'What's the gentleman's name?' inquired the latter, as they crossed the road near Newgate, and proceeded down Snow Hill.

'Clinton,' replied Polly.

'Oh, oh,' again said the seedy young man, as if the name was known to him but he made no further comment, and they proceeded on their way in silence.

Turning up a court near the bottom of Snow Hill, Polly Twitters was led by her companion into Chick-lane, and along that centre of everything vile, to the Old Red Lion.

Entering the hostelry accompanied by the unsuspecting girl, he made a peculiar sign to the landlord, unobserved by her, and leading the way into a small back parlor, where no one was sitting, he rang the bell.

'Is Mr. Clinton here?' said he as the landlord entered. 'This lady wishes to see him.'

'He is here,' replied the host, with assumed hesitation; 'but he is in a bit of trouble, and he is laying up until the thing has blown over; but as a lady is in the case, I dare say as how he'll see her, and so, if you'll follow me, ma'am, I'll conduct you to his presence.'

'Thank you,' said Polly, overjoyed at the near prospect of seeing Clinton, after having almost determined upon abandoning her endeavors to find him. 'I am very much obliged to you, sir,' she added, turning to the seedy man, 'for the trouble you have taken for me.'

'Don't mention it ma'am,' returned the fellow, bowing.

She then followed the landlord from the room, along a passage and down a narrow and winding flight of stone stairs. At the bottom was a door, that her conductor unlocked and opened, showing a dark vaulted apartment, so gloomy that Polly hesitated to enter it.

'Don't be afeared, ma'am,' said the landlord. 'Mr. Clinton will be here directly, and, placing the light which he had brought upon a small oaken table

in the centre of the subterranean passage on the opposite side to that on which the door was situated by which she had entered, and her pulses beat more rapidly as she anticipated the moment when she would be clasped in the arms of her seducer. A low door, which she had not observed before, was now opened, and a man entered, and advanced towards her; but the instant that the light of the candle fell upon his countenance she perceived that it was not Clinton, but the seedy man who had brought her to the tavern.

'Where is Mr. Clinton?' she exclaimed, now beginning to feel alarmed, especially as the fellow had locked the door by which he had entered, and put the key in his pocket.

The seedy young man made no answer, but, throwing his arms around her, threw her down upon the damp earthen floor of the vault. A shriek burst from the lips of the dreadfully terrified young girl, and reverberated through the subterranean apartment, but the ruffian stifled her cries by thrusting a handkerchief into her mouth, and in spite of her unavailing resistance, violated her. Then he thrust his hand into her pocket, expecting to find money there, but, being disappointed, he next rudely invaded the sanctity of the outraged girl's throbbing bosom, and there he found the ten-pound note sent to her by Clinton. Having possessed himself of this, he quitted the vault by means of the door by which his betrayed victim had entered it, and, locking it behind him, ascended the stairs to share the produce of the robbery with the landlord.

Polly Twitters removed the gag from her mouth, as she heard the key grate in the lock, and rose trembling, weeping, and with disordered apparel from the floor, and clasped her hands, gazed around her with a look of wildness and horror. What was to be her fate she dared not think; it might be immurement in that gloomy vault for life—it might be slow starvation—it might be the more merciful one of death by the assassin's hand before the dawn of another day! She essayed to open both the doors, but with neither was she successful. Then she burst into an agony of tears, and sank in an attitude of grief and despair upon the cold, damp floor.

Her unavailing anguish at length exhausted itself by its violence, and, becoming comparatively calm, she rose and made a minute and careful examination of the vault. After some time

spent in this investigation, she found an iron ring in one corner, and found that it was attached to a square stone, covered with earth to the depth of an inch. Scraping off the earth with her hands, in the hope that the stone might conceal some means of egress from the vault, she raised the stone with some difficulty, disclosing an abyss, the black gloom of which her eyes could not penetrate.

Taking the light from the table, she held it above the aperture, so as to throw its flickering rays upon the sides of the abyss, and, perceiving a ladder, she unhesitatingly descended, carrying the light in her hand. When she reached the bottom of the ladder, she found herself in a small, cavern-like apartment, with an arched roof; the walls were streaming with moisture, and an unwholesome odour pervaded the place. To her disappointment and dismay, there appeared to be no means of egress therefrom, but by the way she had come, and as she threw a shuddering glance around, her eyes fell upon an object so ghastly and appalling that the sight of it seemed to freeze the current of her blood. In the corner of the vault, most removed from the first eager look which she had thrown into it on reaching the foot of the ladder, the corpse of a man, stripped of the garments which it had worn in life, was stretched out upon the floor, among the inequalities of which lay puddles of stagnant water. For a moment the horrified girl stood with her eyes fixed upon the ghastly object, as if the spectacle had been invested with the Medusa-like power of turning the beholder into stone; and then a shriek burst from her pale and quivering lips, the light fell from her trembling hand, and she fell insensible upon the floor of the vault.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PLANK ACROSS THE DITCH, AND THE MURDER.

WHILE the wretched Polly Twitters lay insensible in the gloomy vault below that house of mystery and crime, the Red Lion tavern in Chick-lane, Clinton, Artuad, Hamilton, and a score of others, higwaymen, burglars, coiners, sharpers, were revelling in the long parlor, where we left them in company with about the same number of the degraded women who habitually frequented the tavern.

And while drunken revelry, shameless lewdness, profanity, and ribaldry reigned there, six men, all stout and athletic, and armed with cutlasses and loaded pistols, were advancing along the lane, from the direction of Smithfield, in single file, and with such an interval between each, as enabled them to escape observation. Each of the party stopped near the Red Lion, and when they were all assembled, each drew his cutlass with his right hand, and a pistol with his left, and the foremost of the party, who was the thief-taker, Holdemfast, commanded the landlord, in a stern and authoritative tone, to throw open the doors of the parlor.

Yielding to the display of force made by the Bow street janizaries, the landlord opened the door, shouting with reckless audacity as he did so,—

‘Mr. Holdemfast and party!’

The women screamed and turned pale at this intrusion, and the men sprang to their feet, uttering imprecations, and rushed towards the door. The landlord rushed back to the bar, and began furiously to beat the long brazen gong, that was there suspended from the ceiling.

Most of the thieves were armed with pistols, and Hamilton, and two or three others wore swords; and those who were not so provided snatched up such weapons as offered, as the fire-arms, candlesticks, and pewter measures. A volley of such missiles as pint pots and glasses, was hurled at the heads of the officers, and blood began to flow immediately. But the invaders would have been content with the capture of Clinton and Hamilton, and directed their exertions towards that object, allowing such others as were more intent upon securing their own personal safety, than punishing the officers for their invasion, to escape through the open door. Using only the flat sides of their cutlasses and the but ends of their pistols, they successfully defended themselves, and maintain their position, until the numbers became nearly equal, by the flight of those whom they allowed to pass, and then they seized Clinton and Hamilton, whose escape they had strenuously opposed.

The seven or eight robbers remaining now discharged their pistols, and one of the officers fell, shot through the heart by a ball from the weapon of Frederick Hamilton, and another received a ball in his left shoulder. Clinton was seized by two of the officers, and disarmed; and Hamilton, after piercing Holdemfast

through the right arm with his sword, received a stroke of a cutlass, which inflicted a severe gash upon his forehead, and prostrated him upon the floor. He was then speedily handcuffed, but before the manacling operation could be performed upon our hero, the booming of the gong, and the alarm spread by those who had escaped from the tavern, brought in a motley throng, such as we have described in a former chapter.

‘Down with the traps! to-co for the ban-dogs!’ resounded on all sides, and rusty cutlasses were brandished, and axes glimmered in the lamp-light.

‘Keep back!’ cried one of the police officers. ‘The first man who attempts to prevent the removal of the prisoners shall be shot dead.’

This threat only elicited from the swarming horde of vicious characters a savage yell of defiance, and a furious attack was immediately made upon the officers, who then fired a volley, and two of the foremost fell dead at their feet, while two or three more were borne wounded and bleeding from the door.

‘Down with ’em! cut ’em to pieces!’ roared the mob of thieves, who thronged within the bar and around the house, and a fresh assault was made upon the officers, two or three of whom received wounds, more or less serious.

Clinton had continued to resist, and in the *melee* consequent upon the invasion of the place by the horde of thieves and desperate characters who swarmed around them, it had been impossible to handcuff him. In the second assault, he contrived to break from the grasp of the two officers who held him, and who were both wounded by the rusty cutlasses and pikes of the assailants; and springing into the arms of the friendly thieves, he made his way towards the door.

But at that moment, a cry arose from the street, of ‘The soldiers are coming!’ and looking from the door, he perceived at the Smithfield end of the street, a score of bayonets gleaming in the light of an oil-lamp, at the door of the tavern. The reports of fire-arms, and the yells of the mob, had induced a magistrate, who happened to be near the spot, to request the commanding officer of a detachment that was at the moment ascending Snow hill, on their way to the Tower, to go to the assistance of the police officers. Clinton was for a moment irresolute, whether to rush into the street or to seek some other avenue of escape, but a cry being raised, by a ringleader

of the mob of thieves, of 'Fall back and scatter!' those within the bar made their way to the door, and those without retreated before the levelled bayonets of the advancing soldiery.

Two of the officers now rushed upon Clinton, and attempted to throw him down, but he tripped up one and knocked down the other, and leaped over the bar-counter with the agility of a deer. Entering the room behind, he pressed a brass knob above the mantle-piece, upon which, the fire-place revolving on a pivot disclosed a secret means of communication with a dark passage, terminating at the head of a flight of stone stairs. Down these he rushed, threw open a door at the bottom, passed through and shooting the heavy bolts on the inside, paused to listen. Hearing footsteps resounding along the secret passage above, he resumed his flight, and opening a door on the opposite side of the apartment in which he had found himself, he threaded another passage, and came to a low arched door.

The subterraneans of the place had been before explored by him in company with the landlord, and he was, therefore, acquainted with all their outlets and hiding-places. As he opened the last door, the night air blew coldly upon his countenance, and a horrible stench saluted his olfactory organ; his vision had become accustomed to the darkness in rushing through the gloomy passages, stairs, and vaults, which he had traversed, and he was therefore enabled to see before him a plank extending from the door to the dismantled window of a house in the rear of the Red Lion. Between the two houses, and at some distance below the plank, flowed the black and fœtid current of the Fleet Ditch, gurgling on with a hoarse murmur and lading the atmosphere with the malaria of pestilence and death.

Closing the door behind him, Clinton rushed across the plank and leaped through the opposite window, long dismantled alike of glass and frame, into the cellar of the house, which was half filled with rubbish. The house was empty and in a very dilapidated condition, so that he had no difficulty in effecting his exit from it into a narrow, dirty alley at the back of the tavern, from which he had escaped.

Further we shall not follow him at present, but return to the Red Lion, and relate what occurred there after his escape from the grasp of the two Bow street officers who had seized him at the

moment that the horde of thieves in the line were dispersed by the soldiery at the point of the bayonet.

Two of the officers had bounded after Clinton, and followed him along the secret passage behind the bar-room, and down the stairs to which it led, but their further progress was arrested by the bolted door. After a vain attempt to break it open, they returned to procure crow-bars and forge-hammers, with which they assailed it, and in a few minutes broke it down. Forcing open the other doors in the same manner, they came to the plank across the ditch, at which they paused.

'It is useless to go any further,' said one of them, 'he has escaped through the house into the alley, and we must content ourselves with the capture of Fred Hamilton. Faugh! how the ditch stinks.'

Glad to escape from the stench of the Fleet, the police-officers retraced their steps, and having bound up their wounds, and recruited their exhausted energies, they quitted the tavern with their prisoner and the corpse of the slain officer. The soldiers escorted them as far as the Old Bailey, and the vile denizens of Chick-lane were thus deterred from making any assault upon the officers, with a view of rescuing the captive highwayman. Frederick Hamilton was lodged in one of the cells of his majesty's jail of Newgate without any farther trouble, and those of the police officers, who were not disabled by their wounds, immediately commenced an active search after Clinton in the neighborhood of Saffron-hill, Field-lane, Smithfield, and St. John street.

While the incidents described in the foregoing were being enacted, Polly Twitters lay insensible upon the cold wet earth in the gloomy vault of which a naked corpse was the ghastly joint tenant. With a convulsive shudder, the horror-stricken girl awakened from the swoon into which she had fallen, and when consciousness had fully returned, she ascended the ladder with all the speed which her trembling limbs were capable of exerting. Cimmerian darkness shrouded every part of the subterranean chamber in which she had been subjected to the brutal licentiousness of the fellow who had brought her to the tavern, and before she could feel her way a couple of yards from the aperture through which the vault below was entered, she heard footsteps descending the stone steps by which she had

been brought down by the villain landlord.

Though she could not distinguish the voices of the persons who were approaching, and, of course, knew not their object, she instinctively crouched under the table, which her extended hands had touched at the moment when the footsteps fell upon her ears. Coiled up and trembling, she heard the key grate in the lock, and then the door creaked on its hinges, and the light of a lamp, carried by one of the persons who entered, flashed redly and flickeringly upon the damp walls of the subterranean.

'By Jove, she's mizzled!' exclaimed a voice, which she recognised as that of the landlord, and the tone in which he spoke was one of surprise.

'She can't have got away,' said another and strange voice. 'But she's found out the stone, though!—and now it won't do to let her off, because she'd whiddle about the stiff'un in the darky.'

'Well, I can't say as I admire her taste, if she prefers the subject's company to Nutty Bill's,' observed the landlord. 'But couldn't we hocus her, and then take in the darkmans to another crib? I don't want to slit the wench's weazand if we can help it.'

'I s'pose you have taken a fancy to the young woman,' returned the other. 'Think she didn't notice the sign of this boozing-ken, even if Nutty Bill didn't mention it hisself to her?—and, besides, if we let her off in the way you propose, ain't it more likely than t'other as she'll fall in with Clinton?—and don't you think she'd tell him all about how Bill served her, and then, wouldn't there be the devil to pay in that quarter?'

'Supposing she's a cull of his,' responded the landlord.

'And ain't it clear enough that she is?' said the other. 'Does she look like his sister? Ain't it more likely that she's some country wench that he's been sweet upon?—and who knows but that letter was intended to bring her up to town?'

'Walker!' returned the landlord.—'Wouldn't Clinton have sent directions where to find him, if that was the case? To be sure he would.'

'Well, let that be as it may,' said the other fellow, 'ain't it clear enough that it will be bad for our healths to let her go at large, to whiddle all she knows about this 'spectable crib of yours?'

The last words were spoken as the two ruffians descended the ladder, and

the trembling victim of Nutty Bill's treachery did not hear the reply made by the landlord. They had not secured the door at the bottom of the stone stairs, a neglect which Polly Twitters attributed to inadvertence, and as soon as they had disappeared through the aperture, she emerged from her concealment, and rushed up the stairs. To her inexpressible disappointment, however, she found the door above locked, and the key taken away. She knocked open the door with her hand, but if heard, the sound was not heeded; and, while trembling at the top of the stairs, she heard the footsteps of the two men in the apartment below, and saw the light of their lamp glimmering upon the lower steps.

She gave herself up for lost, for she thought the men would certainly come up the stairs, but while she stood trembling, and with breath suspended, she heard the door by which Nutty Bill had entered opened, and then the light disappeared, and the sounds of the men's retiring footsteps ceased. They were not searching for her, then, or they would not have left the subterranean apartment below, without having discovered her. Their object in descending into the vault had probably been to remove the corpse which she had seen there, and which might be intended for the dissecting-room of some surgeon.

She crept down upon the stairs again, and sat down upon the lowest step, wondering what would be the next incident in the horrible drama of the night.—For more than an hour she sat there, in darkness as black, and silence as profound as those of the grave, and her mind began to recover its equanimity, though the fearful danger that remained impending over her, still sat like an iceberg upon her heart. Then she heard footsteps approaching again from the direction in which they had retired, and she sped up the stairs as before, and awaited the result of the search which she anticipated, with fear and trembling. She heard the door opened, and saw the light of the lamp glimmer upon the lower steps, and then she heard the voice of the men.

'She must have been somewhere here when we went below,' said the landlord.

'True,' rejoined the fellow who had accompanied him before. 'I thought then she was in the darky, but she must, as you say, have been hiding here. She must have been under the table, but she ain't there now.'

'I don't want two eyes to see that, Sam,' said the landlord. 'She must be upon the stairs—unless she's dived into the darky agin.'

'I'll soon fetch her out of that,' said Sam, and, springing up the stairs, he there discovered the pale and trembling girl, shrinking into a corner near the door.

She uttered a piercing shriek, which was heard in the bar, but disregarded by the two or three low-looking ruffians who were drinking there, from whom it elicited only a remark that 'the governor was having a lark with some fresh caught 'un, as was rayther bashful.'—And Sam heeded the shriek which burst from the poor girl's lips, and the look of terror which she cast upon him, as little as the guests at the bar, and while he threw his left arm round her waist, and dragged her down stairs, he pressed his right hand upon her mouth to stifle her cries.

'Spare me!' screamed the affrighted girl, when she had succeeded, by a violent struggle, in removing the ruffian's hand from her mouth; but the next moment she was thrown upon the floor, and Sam doubled her shawl over her face, with the intention of suffocating her.

'Mercy!—for the love of heaven spare me!' cried Polly, struggling upon the ground with the ruffian; and she partially raised herself and grasped his arm.

'Take that!' exclaimed the ruffian, dealing her a blow upon the face with his hand, which covered it with blood, and prostrated her upon the floor.

Then he grasped her throat and pressed it until she ceased to struggle, and the blood rushed to her face, until the vessels became gorged to blackness.

'It's all over with her now,' said the ruffian, as he rose from the ground.—'And the Fleet will hide this here business from every eye.'

'Let's shove her in at once, Sam,' said the landlord. 'If you could have done it without leaving them black marks on her throat, it would have been all the better, though.'

Why, what is there to fear? The Fleet will carry her to the river, and the next tide will take her out to sea; and if she *should* get picked up, what then?—Who'll tell whose crib she's floated from?

'Nobody knows of her coming here 'cept Nutty Bill,' returned the landlord, 'but if anybody had come with her as

won't of the family, it might be awkward, you know. But let's make an end of the job—bear a hand.'

'Stop till I've nipped her ear-bobs,' rejoined Sam, tearing the gold ear-rings from the murdered girl. 'They are the real wedge. and I deserve 'em for stopping her wind for you.'

'Well, I wants no reg'lars out of a job like this,' returned the landlord, who did not seem to much relish the villainous business in which they were engaged. 'It's a shade too deep for me, Sam, and that's the honest truth.'

'Bah!' ejaculated his less scrupulous companion, with a sneer; and then the two ruffians lifted the corpse from the ground, and carried it out by the door through which they had entered.

This door formed a communication between the apartment where Polly Twitters had been murdered, and that which Clinton crossed in his flight from the pursuit of the officers. The low arched passage was threaded by the two villains, and then they reached the door opening on the margin of the Fleet ditch. The door was no sooner opened by the landlord, than a gush of cold air extinguished the lamp which he carried; but no light was needed for the completion of the horrible tragedy, and in another moment the corpse of the unfortunate Polly Twitters fell, with a dull splash, into the black and fetid water that rolled gurgling below.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SEARCH.

WE must now return to Ernest Montgomery.

It was not until the evening of the day after that on which he embarked at Sidmouth, that the vessel in which he had sailed cast anchor in the harbor of Rochefort; and such was his anxiety concerning Rose Clinton, and his impatience to behold her, that he inquired for the Rue d'Eglise, and proceeded in search of it, the moment he was set on shore. Pushing his way through groups of seamen, marines, and dock laborers, he at length found the street of which he was in quest, and then he began examining the brass plates on the doors for the name of Madame Ponise. He soon discovered it, and, knocking at the door, a joyous thrill pervaded his heart at the thought of meeting his be-

loved Rose, and he actually trembled with the nervousness of suspense.

At length, he was about to behold again the loved one who had been torn from him—to press her once more to his throbbing heart—to feel the beating of her heart against his own—to feel the soft and thrilling pressure of her moist red lips—to read love in her mild blue eyes—to hear her repeat those assurances of enduring constancy and boundless love, which carried such delight to his heart.

In less than a minute—though it seemed an interminable period to the anxious and impatient lover—the door was opened, and Madame Ponise inquired his business.

‘I wish to see Miss Clinton, madame,’ said Ernest; and then, observing that the lady looked surprised, he added, ‘A young English lady who lodges here.’

‘She is no longer here, monsieur,’ said Madame Ponise, shaking her head. ‘She left my house four or five days ago!’

‘Indeed!’ exclaimed Montgomery, his heart beginning to sink within him. ‘Can you acquaint me with her present address?’

‘Unfortunately I cannot, monsieur,’ replied Madame Ponise, with another shake of the head. ‘I have reason to believe, however, that the young lady has quitted Rochefort, and gone to Paris!’

‘To Paris!’ exclaimed Ernest, almost overcome by the crushing disappointment.

‘Yes, monsieur,’ returned the lady. ‘But come in—my daughter can probably give you some further information concerning Mademoiselle Clinton, for Julie and the young lady grew very intimate during the few days that they were together.’

Surprised, disappointed, and almost bewildered, Ernest Montgomery entered the house, and followed Madame Ponise into the well-furnished parlor, which presented indications of means superior to what might have been anticipated from the outward appearance of the house. A Brussels carpet covered the floor, an ormolu time-piece and a pair of alabaster vases adorned the mantle-piece, and the coverings of the chairs and the luxurious sofa were of striped silk. Wax candles in silver candlesticks, burned upon the table, the curtains were closely drawn over the window, and a cheerful fire burned in the

grate, diffusing a genial warmth through the apartment.

Two or three well executed paintings, in gilt frames, were suspended against the walls, the subjects taken, as the cursory glance which Montgomery threw around him as he entered enabled him to perceive, from Ovid’s poetic records of the amours of the Olympian deities. In one, the rival goddesses, candidates for the prize of beauty, unveiled their charms to the gaze of the enraptured Paris, the shepherd-prince of Troy, on the summit of pine-clad Ida; in another, the amorous Jove, incarnated in the swan, hovered his snowy pinions over the panting bosom of Leda; and in a third, the ocean-born goddess of Paphos exerted all the magic power of her charms, to dissuade Adonis, from the toils and dangers of the chase.

The door opened in a moment, after Madame Ponise had ushered Ernest Montgomery into the room, and a young female, of singular personal attractions entered. She was rather under than over what may be considered the ordinary height of woman, possessed of a sylphide figure, and about twenty years of age. Her hair, long, black, silken and glossy, fell in a shower of ringlets over her bare, white, and gracefully sloping shoulders, and her too much exposed bosom, the heaving snows of which might have kindled desire in the breast of an anchorite. Her complexion was clear and fine, and the roses and lilies were harmoniously blended on her cheeks.

Her eyes were large and dark as those of the Houri of Mahomet’s fabled Paradise; but as that is a comparison to be realized only in the imagination, the reader may better conceive the softness, the brilliancy, and the changing expression of the dark orbs of the charming French girl, by looking upon those of the young gazelle. Her round white arms were bare, bracelets of pearls adorned her wrists, and the well-fitting silk dress displayed the mature charme and graces of the young girl’s form.

‘You are the friend of Mademoiselle Clinton, Monsieur?’ said she, as she sat down upon the sofa, and Montgomery resumed the seat from which he had risen on her entrance. ‘Ah, I am afraid that the little information which it is in my power to afford you, will be neither satisfactory nor agreeable.’

‘Good heavens, Mademoiselle! what mean you?’ exclaimed Montgomery.

'Pray keep me not in suspense. Has anything hapened to Miss Clinton?'

'She was perfectly well when I saw her last,' returned Mademoiselle Ponise, 'and I have no reason to suppose she is otherwise, now. But if you love her, monsieur, you must prepare for intelligence that will disappoint the hopes with which you have sought her.'

'What would you have me believe?' exclaimed Montgomery, rising and pacing the room in an agitated manner. 'Rose, inconstant!—no, I cannot, will not believe it.'

'Do not give way to excitement, monsieur,' said the young Frenchwoman.

'Sit down, and I will ring for wine.'

'Not for me, I beg,' said Montgomery, resuming his seat; but Julie had pulled the bell as she spoke, and the servant appearing at the summons, she ordered her to bring in a bottle of claret.

'About three days after she arrived here,' said Mademoiselle Ponise, when the servant had placed the wine on the table, and retired, 'Mademoiselle Clinton spoke to me in the most glowing admiration of the young Marquis of St. Croix, who is commander of the Royal Marines. On the following day, a friend of mine saw her on the Marine Parade, hanging on the arm of the marquis; and on the day afterwards she left for Paris. The marquis left Rochefort on the same day, to return, as reported, to a country seat which he possesses near the capital.'

Ernest Montgomery rose while Julie was speaking, and again paced the room in a state of excitement, painful to witness.

'You are not deceiving me?' he said, at length, in an earnest but agitated tone, as he paused suddenly, and looked keenly into the countenance of the young Frenchwoman. 'This is not some scheme to try the strength of my affection?'

'Oh, no, monsieur!' exclaimed Julie. 'It would be cruel thus to trifle with your feelings. I am telling you nothing but the truth.'

'I feel as if I were in a dream, or as if the evidence of my senses was not to be believed,' exclaimed Montgomery, sinking upon a chair. 'Rose unfaithful!—it is something too terrible to be believed, or being believed,' for the heart and brain to bear up against its searing, crushing, maddening influence.'

'Calm yourself, monsieur,' said Julie Ponise, with a voice and manner so kind, and so full of sympathy, that

they overcame the momentary and faint suspicion which the young Frenchwoman's uncovered bosom, and the subjects of the pictures on the wall had raised at one time in Montgomery's mind. 'Let me prevail upon you to take a glass of wine,' she added, and as she bent forward to fill a glass with claret, the low corsage of her silk dress left nothing for the imagination to perform with regard to the mature charms of her plump and snowy bosom.

'You are very kind, Mademoiselle,' said Ernest Montgomery, faintly, and he took the proffered glass almost mechanically, and slowly drank the contents.

'I pity you, monsieur,' rejoined Julie. 'I see that you loved her well; but think of her no more. There are others as beautiful, as worthy of being beloved as her whose inconstancy you deplore. Another glass, monsieur!'

Montgomery drank another glass of claret, which the fair hand of Julie Ponise poured out for him; nor did her behaviour strike him as being strange, so absorbed was he in the emotions so profoundly stirred by the disclosure of Rose's inconstancy. He sat for some moments with his hand supporting his head, and then he arose somewhat abruptly, as he suddenly recollected that he was unveiling the grief of his heart before a stranger.

'Do not go yet, monsieur,' said Julie, rising, and laying her small white hand upon his arm. 'You are yet far from composed. Take another glass of claret; it will banish thought.'

'I thank you, Mademoiselle, for your expressions of sympathy,' said the disappointed Montgomery, in a tone of sadness, as he turned towards the door; but at that moment a giddiness came over him, the lights seemed to dance before his eyes, and he sank upon the sofa.

He stretched out his hands, and strove to rise again, but there seemed heavy weights upon his brain, and upon his eyelids, seemed to hold him down. He sank rapidly into a state of semi-somnolency, in which he heard and saw indistinctly, like one in a waking dream, female forms flit before his eyes without the power of recognition, and hearing voices without being able to distinguish the words which they uttered. After this, he remembered nothing: the young Frenchwoman, the lights, the pictures, all had vanished, and every sense and faculty was temporarily suspended.

* * * a * *

The golden sunlight of a spring morning was stealing between the white curtains into a comfortably furnished bed-chamber, when Ernest Montgomery awoke from the lethargy in which he had been plunged since the preceding evening; but it was only by slow degrees that consciousness fully returned. He saw the sunlight and the snowy curtains, but his mind was yet in a dreamy state, and he could not for a moment command his thoughts and faculties.

Consciousness, memory, reflection, all returned at length, though as gradually as the tide advances on the seashore, and he became aware that he was in a strange place. Then from the cells of memory came the reminiscences of the past, his landing on the preceding evening, his visit to Madame Ponise, and his interview with Julie. But beyond that he could remember nothing—how he came, where he was he knew not.

For a few moments he lay still, fruitlessly racking his brain, and then he slipped out of bed. A deep-drawn sigh startled him, and turning quickly round he became aware that he had not slept alone. A beautiful young girl, about seventeen years of age had lain by his side, and had been awakened by his getting out of bed. It was not Julie Ponise, for she was younger, her bright eyes were blue as the overarching canopy of heaven, and the ringlets which peeped out from her night cap and strayed over her bosom were golden as those with which painters represent the goddess of love and beauty.

'You stare at me as if I were griffin,' observed the young girl, vivaciously, as a smile stole over her piquant countenance at the confusion and perplexity expressed in that of Montgomery.

'How came I here?—pray explain,' said he, after a pause, as he began to dress.

'Well, I didn't think you were so far gone as that, monsieur,' returned the girl, laughing, as she raised herself in the bed. 'I could see that you had been drinking freely when I met you last night; but not to know how you came here is shocking.'

Montgomery strove to call to mind some incident of the past night which might serve as a clue to his present situation, but in vain; he could not remember leaving the house of Madame Ponise, and he could not persuade himself that he had drank so much claret there as to have become intoxicated. His

present situation was therefore an impenetrable mystery to him, and the more he strove to solve it the more inexplicable it appeared.

'How far is it, from here to the Rue d'Eglise?' said he, after a long pause.

'Not far,' returned the girl, 'it is at the back of this street.'

'Was it at a tavern that you met me?' he inquired.

'No,' replied his companion, 'I encountered you at the corner of the street, and I can assure you that it needed little persuasion on my part to induce you to accompany me.'

Montgomery was as much mystified as before asking the question; he felt in his pockets, but nothing was missing. His pocket-book, his watch, the ring on his finger, all were safe; and as near as he could remember not a sou had been abstracted from his pockets.

'Will you not stay and take breakfast with me?' said his blue-eyed companion, with her most alluring look.

'Excuse me, mademoiselle,' replied Montgomery, placing a guinea on the toilet table. 'I am bewildered—and I have business to attend to.'

'Farewell, then, monsieur!' said the young girl, 'the servant will let you out,' and she pulled a bell-rope, near the head of the bed.

Montgomery opened the door, and descended the stairs; the servant—whose features he thought he had seen before, but could not recollect where—was waiting in the passage to afford him egress, and the tacit appeal which she made to his generosity by dropping a cursey as she opened the front door, drew from him a franc.

He then repaired to the *cafe*, where he breakfasted, and meditated for an hour over the communication of Julie Ponise. He was loath to believe that Rose was unfaithful—that she had forgotten in so brief a period the object of her first love—nay, that (as the communication of the young Frenchwoman led him to believe,) she had, upon an acquaintance of a few days only, surrendered her virtue to the Marquis of St. Croix; and yet he knew not how to refuse credence to the tale, for what possible motive could Julie Ponise have in so cruelly deceiving him? But might not Julie herself have been misinformed? might not the story of Rose's elopement with the marquis, be a false report? She might have spoken to Julie in his praise, she might have left Rochefort, for some unexplained reason, and

on the same day as the marquis; but this might be accident, a mere coincidence, by no means warranting the supposition that she had become the marquis's mistress. But then she had been seen with St. Croix, on the Marine Parade; this might have been a mistake, a fabrication, or, if true, the result of some accident, the correct details of which would cause the matter to wear a totally different aspect. The possibility of all this being admitted, and the reader may imagine how fondly and tenaciously the young man clung to the idea of Rose's innocence, it was his duty to follow on to Paris, and endeavor to trace her out, and this was likewise the course to which he was prompted by his inclinations.

That morning, therefore, he left Rochefort, and after a journey of nearly three days he reached Paris. It was at night when he entered the gay capital, and having engaged apartments at an hotel, he retired to rest. On the following morning, as he was descending the steps in front of the hotel, he felt some one touch him on the shoulder, and heard his name pronounced by a voice which seemed familiar to him. Looking round, he beheld a fashionably dressed young man, whom he immediately recognised as the young Lord Marchdale, who had been at college with him, but whom he had not seen since.

'I thought I could not be mistaken,' observed the young nobleman, extending his hand to Montgomery. 'How long have you been in Paris, Mr. Montgomery?'

'I arrived only last night,' replied Ernest, grasping the proffered hand of the young nobleman.

'But what is the matter with you?' said Lord Marchdale. 'You look as melancholy as the knight of the rueful countenance, and your voice and whole manner seems changed since our college days.'

'You would feel no surprise at the change you observe,' said Montgomery, 'if you knew its causes. But perhaps you can serve me—if you have been some time a resident here, it is probable you can.'

'If I can, my dear Montgomery,' returned Lord Marchdale, 'I shall do so with pleasure.'

'Do you know the Marquis of St. Croix?' inquired Montgomery.

'I have seen him,' replied Marchdale.

'What is his character?' inquired Montgomery.

'Common reports speak of him as a libertine of the most unscrupulous character,' returned the young nobleman, 'but such rumours are often exaggerated? he is regarded by his brother officers as a good companion, and by the men as a martinet, but I know, from personal observation, that he is addicted to gallantry and dissipation.'

'Amid the contaminating influences of the profligacy which reigns at the regal Louvre,' observed Montgomery, gloomily, 'I think that the man whom common report points out as more than ordinarily debauched, must be a very Borgia. I heard at Rochefort, that the marquis had left a week ago for his country seat near this city.'

'But what of him?' asked Lord Marchdale, with curiosity.

'I will tell you all, my friend,' said Montgomery, 'and perhaps you may assist me with your advice. A short time since, the sister of a farmer at Cheam, a young lady, to whom I was devotedly attached, disappeared from her home under very mysterious circumstances. Some trifling incidents directed me to Sidmouth in search of her, but I failed to discover her, and returned to Banstead. There I discovered that I had been on the right track, and obtained additional information as to the very house in which the young lady had been confined. Again I hastened down to Sidmouth, but she had been removed from thence, an accident threw in my way the master of the smuggling lugger in which she had been carried over to Rochefort. From him I received information where to find the young lady, but on reaching Rochefort, I was informed by Mademoiselle Ponise, the daughter of the lady with whom the object of my regard had been residing—'

'Mademoiselle Ponise!' exclaimed Lord Marchdale, interrupting Montgomery, with an air of surprise.

'Yes—do you know her, then?' returned Ernest.

'I have met her,' said the young nobleman, with a peculiar smile. 'But proceed with your narration.'

'Mademoiselle Ponise, to whom I was introduced by her mother, informed me that Miss Clinton had left them, and on the same day the Marquis of St. Croix, in whose company the young lady had been seen on the Marine Parade, left the town for his chateau near Paris,' said Montgomery.

'And did Mademoiselle Ponise suffer you to depart, without attempting to console you for the disappointment you had experienced?' inquired Lord Marchdale, with the same peculiar smile.

'What mean you?' returned Montgomery, struck by the singular expression of his friends countenance.

'I may be mistaken,' said Lord Marchdale, with an entire change of manner. 'The Mademoiselle Ponise, of whom I suppose you to be speaking, resides in the Rue d'Eglise.'

'It is the same,' returned Montgomery. 'But you have excited my curiosity—pray tell me what you know concerning her.'

'Was there nothing in the manners of Mademoiselle Ponise during your interview, calculated to raise a suspicion in your mind, that she was not a person whom you would approve as a companion for a virtuous young lady?' inquired Lord Marchdale.

'I certainly thought the corsage of her dress lower than was warranted by modesty,' returned Montgomery, 'but I know how easily the middle classes acquire the habits and manners of the aristocracy, and that the court of Louis XV. is not a seminary of virtue, or even decency. I could not expect a high tone of morality among a people who tolerate the Deer Park and Madame Dubarry.'

'In plain terms, then, you had no suspicion that Mademoiselle Ponise was a young lady of the easiest virtue, and her mother a vile procuress?' observed Lord Marchdale.

'You amaze and alarm me!' exclaimed Montgomery. 'Ah now a light breaks in upon my mind—but you can, perhaps, solve the mystery. I drank two glasses of claret at Madame Ponise's, and from the moment I rose to depart I remembered nothing, until I found myself in bed with a young female, at a house in a street, near the Rue d'Eglise. The girl, as she said, had met me at the corner of the street—I appeared to have been drinking—and I accompanied her home. But concerning all this, I knew only what she told me.'

'And this street was exactly at the back of the Rue d'Eglise?' observed Lord Marchdale.

Montgomery replied in the affirmative.

'Then I can solve the mystery,' continued the young nobleman. 'The claret was drugged—you became insensi-

ble—and then you were transferred to the chamber of one of the demoiselles of Madame Ponise's establishment. What amount of truth there may be in the story told you by Julie Ponise, I, of course, cannot say; but you will easily understand how it was to the interest of the dark-eyed French girl to tell you such a tale. Julie is an old acquaintance of mine, and if you should fail to discover the lady, of whom you are in search, by any other means, I will readily undertake a journey to Rochefort on your account.'

'Thanks, my friend,' said Montgomery, and after a moment's pause, he added—'But you have not explained the mystery of my awakening in a street in the Rue d'Eglise.'

'True,' returned Lord Marchdale.—'Between the two streets there are only narrow yards, and there is a communication by means of a gallery carried over the yard, between the house of Madame Ponise in the Rue d'Eglise and that in which you found yourself the next morning, which is held by the same lady. I must now leave you, as I have a call to make just here—I trust you will soon be successful.'

Montgomery and the young nobleman then separated, and the former determined to find out the chateau of the Marquis of St. Croix, and if he could not gather, by indirect inquiries in the neighborhood, any intelligence concerning Rose Clinton, to claim the promised co-operation of his friend Lord Marchdale.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FAUXBOURG ST. ANTOINE.

ERNEST MONTGOMERY left the gay city of Paris, by one of the western barriers, and proceeded in the direction that he had ascertained the chateau of the Marquis of St. Croix to be situated. The revelations of Lord Marchdale, relative to the character of Julie Ponise and her mother, had turned into a new, but not less terrible channel. His thoughts concerning Rose Clinton, and the supposition that she had become a victim to some infernal conspiracy, in which Madame Ponise and the Marquis of St. Croix had been the principal actors, was so much more consistent with the young girl's character, than the story told him by Julie, that he could not

but regard it as by far the most correct version.

He shuddered as he thought of the perils to which Rose might be exposed, for such a character as the Marquis of St. Croix, supported by a vile procuress of the Rue de Eglise, was not likely to hesitate at any means of obtaining the gratification of his desires, however atrocious.

The example of the profligate monarch who then sat upon the throne of France, had corrupted all the nobility, and the licentiousness generated in the polluted atmosphere of the regal Louvre, had sped like a pestilence over France, and infected all classes of the people.—Madame Dubarry, a common courtesan, picked up by the depraved and degraded monarch, in some filthy sink of vice, ruled the destinies of France by her influence over the royal voluptuary, and maintained her ascendancy over him in his declining years, by establishing and presiding over the infamous chateau of the Deer Park, where girls of twelve or thirteen years of age, purchased or stolen from their parents, were kept to minister to his depraved taste. Chastity had become a reproach—marriage was scoffed at and ridiculed—seduction and adultery were fashionable vices—virtue and religion were publicly treated with contempt and derision. Did the father, brother, or lover of some outraged female attempt to avenge the wrong, or a husband menace the seducer of his wife, a cell in the Bastille was always ready to receive him, and blank *lettre de cachet* were easily obtainable from the minister or his colleagues, and even from the subordinate functionaries of the government. The Bastille became a living tomb to the victim immured within its gloomy walls; his friends knew not what had become of him, and so many blank warrants were granted to gratify private vengeance, that even the minister was often unacquainted with his existence.

His knowledge of the frightful state of French society at that period, the statements of Julie Ponise, and the revelations of Lord Marchdale, inspired Ernest Montgomery with the most vivid and terrible apprehensions as to the probable fate of his beloved Rose. He hurried on to the village in which was situated the chateau of St. Croix, and soon after noon he reached it.

It was a secluded place, surrounded by gardens, orchards, cornfields, and woods, with the silver Seine meander-

ing through the valley, the church-tower peeping out from among the trees, a water-mill on the margin of the river, and the ruins of a castle on a neighboring eminence. On inquiring for the chateau of the Marquis of St. Croix, he was informed by a peasant that it had been burnt to the ground during the preceding night, and that the marquis was supposed to have perished in the flames.

'Heavens!' exclaimed Ernest, overwhelmed by the idea that Rose might have been an inmate of the chateau at the time, and have perished likewise.—'What was the cause of the shocking catastrophe—how did the fire originate?'

'The cause is unknown, monsieur,' replied the peasant, 'but it appears to have broken out in one of the bed chambers, and not being immediately discovered, it obtained such a hold upon the walls, that it became impossible to save any portion of the building from destruction.'

'The corpse of the marquis has not been discovered yet?' observed Ernest, interrogatively.

'I have not heard that it has, monsieur,' replied the peasant. 'An engine from Paris was playing upon the ruins to cool them, when I passed the spot just now, and I could then gather nothing concerning his lordship, except that he was in the bed-chamber in which the fire broke out, a short time before it was discovered, and as he had not been seen by any one since, it was supposed that he had perished in the flames.'

'Is it known whether any other lives have been lost?' inquired Montgomery.

'It is believed not, monsieur,' replied the man.

'Do you happen to know whether anybody was at the chateau previous to the fire?' inquired Montgomery, placing a crown in the peasant's hand.

'His lordship was a very gay man,' replied the man, touching the broken rim of his crooked and napless hat, 'and there was generally some lady with him at the chateau, but I cannot say whether there was at the time of the accident.'

'Thank you,' said Montgomery, turning away.

'Good morning, my lord,' returned the peasant, lifting his dilapidated hat, and making a bow, the politeness of which was excruciating.

Montgomery then proceeded towards

the chateau, which stood in a spacious park, belted by chesnut trees; a number of persons were gathered about the ruins, talking of the fire, and commenting upon the character of the marquis. Laborers were at work in removing the charred and blackened beams and rafters, and heaps of bricks and rubbish, and Ernest waited nearly an hour, when the scorched, burned, and ghastly remains of the marquis were at length disinterred. According to all the information which Montgomery could collect upon the spot, St. Croix had been the only victim of the conflagration, which, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary was attributed to accident.

Montgomery left the spot, and returned slowly to Paris. He had now reason to believe that Rose Clinton had escaped from the power of St. Croix, supposing that she had been at any time a compulsory resident at the chateau, and as she would not be likely to return to Rochefort, both from the want of means and the fear of Madame Ponise, it was in Paris that he must look for her. But where? He might wander from street to street, by day and by night, and while days and weeks passed away in the unavailing search, the hapless object of it might be perishing in a garret, or imploring charity on the quays and bridges.

Yet the search must be made; and for three days Ernest Montgomery wandered about the streets of Paris, now in the aristocratic quarters of the Chaussee d'Antin and the Rue St. Honore, and now in the narrow, dirty streets of the city, the courts of the Quartier Latin, and the haunts of poverty in the crowded faubourgs of St. Marceau, and St. Antoine. His researches were fruitless; many a pair of eyes as darkly blue as the violets held in the hand of her to whom they belonged, were raised timidly to his countenance as he crossed the bridges connecting the city with the opposite banks of the Seine. Many a fair girl smiled alluringly upon him as he wandered around the Palais Royal—many a houseless wanderer, as lovely as Rose Clinton, he beheld in the city and the faubourgs, when the silver moon was reflecting in the pebbles which lay on the broken pavement, and the oil-lamps glimmered fitfully, as they swung in the night wind from the ropes by which they are suspended across the streets—but he met not her of whom he was in search.

On the third night of his search he was passing down a dimly lighted street in the Fauxbourg St. Antoine, when he observed three men before him, who, by their gesticulations, their boisterous laughter, and the snatches of song with which they occasionally enlivened their way, appeared to be intoxicated. A female entered the street by a court, just as they were passing, when one of them seized her rudely, and she screamed for assistance. Montgomery hastened to the spot, and upon coming up with the men, commanded them to let the woman go, upon which they faced about and menaced him with the bludgeons which they carried under their arms. Ernest drew his sword, and the features of the female being revealed to him by the light of the lamp suspended from a rope stretched across the street, as she struggled with her assailant, he instantly recognized them as those of Rose Clinton!

He rushed so furiously upon the ruffians in whose embraces she was struggling, that he hastily released her in order to defend himself, and she ran from the spot in alarm. Montgomery would have followed her, but the three ruffians fell on him together, and his rapier was no match for three stout cudgels. The first blow shivered the blade of his weapon into three pieces, before he had time to draw blood upon either of his assailants, and the second laid him prostrate and senseless upon the muddy and broken pavement.

When he recovered, the ruffians were gone—his watch, his purse, the diamond ring from his finger, and the silver hilt of his sword were gone likewise.—He rose from the muddy pavement, and despite his broken and aching head, and his soiled garments, he explored every street, lane and alley in that quarter of Paris, continuing the search until the grey light of morning appeared in the east; but Rose Clinton had disappeared—he met her not, and the guardians of the night had not seen her.

* * * *

We must now take up the thread of Rose Clinton's adventures, where we dropped it, when we left her at Madame Ponise's in the Rue d'Eglise at Rochefort.

We must observe, before proceeding further, that Clayton, the smuggler, knew not, nor suspected the nature of Madame Ponise's avocations, so well veiled were they by the millinery displayed in the window of the house in the Rue de

Eglise, and by the secret gallery of communication between it and the corresponding house in the rear, in which Ernest had found himself on the morning of his interview with Julie Ponise. No disguise was attempted as to the character of the latter house, but the respectability of the other was always maintained in appearance, and the connection existing between them was known only to the occupants and a few regular visitors, among whom were the Marquis of St. Croix and Lord Marchdale.

About nine o'clock on the evening of the day on which Rose Clinton landed at Rochefort, Julie Ponise visited her in her chamber, attired as when we first introduced her to the reader, but with a scarf thrown over her shoulder.

'Mamma thought you might have nothing for your supper,' said Julie, 'and she has sent me to ask you to take supper with us.'

'Madame Ponise is very kind,' returned Rose, hesitatingly. 'But I eat little supper, and I was just thinking of going to bed.'

'Oh, pray come!' said Julie, and Rose suffered herself to be persuaded by the young French girl to descend to the apartment which has already been described as the scene of the conversation between Julie and Ernest Montgomery.

A fashionable dressed man, about thirty years of age, not unhandsome, but pale from dissipation, late hours, and enervating excesses, was seated at the table; he rose as the English maiden entered, and bowing politely handed her a chair.

'I was not aware that you had company,' said Rose, in some confusion.

We must here observe that Rose was unacquainted with the French language, but as Julie and her mother both spoke English tolerably well, they communicated with her in her own.

'Only my nephew—we don't make company of him,' observed Madame Ponise.

'M. Forestier, Mademoiselle,' said Julie, introducing the young man.

'Mademoiselle Clinton, cousin.'

Rose felt that she could not retreat with a good grace, and she took the chair which M. Forestier had placed for her. A large lobster, nicely garnished with parsley, was on the table, and flanked most invitingly by a bottle of champagne. Though much pressed, both by Madame Ponise and her nephew, Rose declined taking more than two

glasses of wine, and shortly after ten o'clock she retired to her chamber.

Having locked the door, she undressed, and getting into bed was soon fast asleep. About midnight she awoke suddenly, and the impression which was strong upon her mind as to the cause was, that she had been awakened by the opening of the door. It was quite dark, and hearing voices speaking in a subdued tone in the passage, she became somewhat alarmed; she slipped out of bed for the purpose of ascertaining whether her waking impression was correct, knowing that she had locked the door on retiring to rest, but just as she glided with noiseless steps up to the door, she distinguished the voice of Julie Ponise, and an impulse for which she could not account prompted her to listen.

'I tell you she is fast asleep, and that I did not so much as snatch a kiss from her ruby lips,' said a voice which she immediately recognised as that of M. Forestier.

'Still it was imprudent,' said Julie Ponise. 'She might have awakened suddenly, and if a suspicion should enter her mind, your hopes would be marred.'

This was all she heard, save the opening of the door of the adjoining chamber, which she knew was Julie's nephew, and which was now entered by the French girl and M. Forestier. Rose trembled so violently that her limbs could scarcely support her; she felt like one who advances in the darkness until a flash of lightning suddenly reveals a yawning chasm, down which another step would have precipitated him.

She examined the lock of her door; the key was still in it, as she had left it, and the door was still locked. Yet what could she infer from the whispered words of M. Forestier, but that he had been a moment before within her chamber? With her own key in the lock, neither a duplicate nor a pick-lock key would have unlocked the door, and thus the mystery contained in the words she had overheard baffled all her efforts to penetrate it.

A thousand vague terrors now assailed her. The stranger introduced to her as the nephew of Madame Ponise, had, by some inexplicable means, penetrated into her chamber in the night, and Julie had spoken of it merely as an imprudence. The latter words of the French girl were still more calculated to alarm

ber; Julie had spoken to M. Forestier of his hopes in reference to Rose, and these words, coupled with the Frenchman's intrusion into her chamber, and what she had overheard him say to Julie, were of ominous significance. And M. Forestier was now in Julie's chamber; this was decisive as to the French girl's character, and now that Rose's suspicions were fairly awakened, she thought of the pictures which adorned the walls of the supper-room, little thought of before, but from which she now drew the most sinister auguries.

As she thought of the dangers by which she suddenly found herself menaced, she trembled so excessively that she was obliged to cling to the bed-post for support. Then, as her mind gradually became more tranquil, she resolved upon instant flight, and accordingly dressed herself, in order to quit the house as soon as the first glimmer of daylight appeared in the east. Seated by her bedside, her bosom agitated by the most sinister apprehensions, she waited until the clocks of the churches in the town had announced to its sleeping inhabitants the hour of five, when she softly opened the door of her chamber, glided along the passage, and noiselessly descended the stairs.

The front door was locked, and the key had been taken away; she tried to open all the doors in turn which opened from the passage, but all of them were locked, and the keys removed. Her purpose was thus defeated; perhaps it had been anticipated, or, at any rate, guarded against as a possibility which might arise from some inadvertent discovery of the real character of the house and its occupants. She trembled at the thought; but there was no resource but to return to her chamber, with the hope of being enabled to leave the house during the day, for surely, she thought, no attempt would be made to restrain her from so doing.

She had begun to ascend the stairs, when she heard the door of Julie's chamber cautiously opened, and she stood still. Looking upwards, she caught a glimpse of the French girl in her night dress peering over the balustrades, but Julie disappeared in an instant, and she heard the door of her chamber closed again. Then she ascended the stairs, re-entered her chamber, locked the door, and, sitting down by the bed-side, burst into tears.

By degrees she became comparatively calm again, but was suddenly roused

from her reverie into which she had fallen by the re-opening of the door of Julie's chamber, and the sound of light footsteps in the passage. She listened with suspended breath, and the next moment she heard a clicking sound proceeding from the lock of her door, and she started from the chair, thinking that the sanctity of her chamber was about again to be intruded upon. But the footsteps glided away again, and the door of the adjoining room was closed, and then all was still. Advancing to the door, and essaying to open it, she found that she was unable to do so; she could unlock it, but it had been secured by some means on the other side, and she was a prisoner.

CHAPTER XVII.

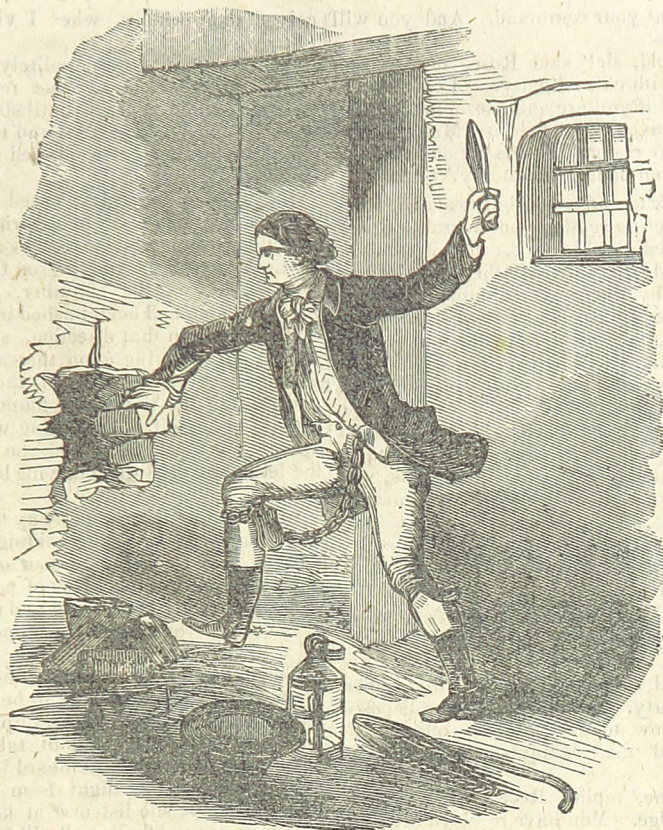
THE MARQUIS OF ST. CROIX.

OVERCOME by the impending perils of her situation, the unfortunate Rose sank into a chair, and covering her face with her hands, burst into tears. After a time she became more tranquil; and though the dread suspense with which she awaited the future still weighed heavily upon her, she was enabled to look her position in the face, and wait with calmness for an opportunity of escape from it. She remained confined to her apartment the whole of the day, her meals being supplied from the table of Madame Ponise, and brought to her by a servant: but her indignant remonstrances against the coercion to which she had been subjected, were disregarded by the girl, and her attempts to enlist the latter's sympathies in her favor were equally unsuccessful.

Evening came, and the beams of the setting sun were glowing upon her chamber window, when she heard a quick step upon the stairs, and turning to the door she beheld it open, and afforded admission to M. Forestier.

'What is the meaning of this intrusion upon the privacy of my chamber?' demanded Rose, on his entrance, indignantly flushing her pale cheeks with a roseate tinge.

'Pardon me, adorable creature!' exclaimed M. Forestier, seizing her hand, and endeavoring to kiss it, 'and impute my conduct, otherwise most unwarrantable, I confess, to the excess of the ardent passion with which you have inspired me.'



THE HIGHWAYMAN'S ESCAPE.

'Ah, M. Forestier,' said Rose Clinton, withdrawing her hand, and casting upon him a look of reproach; 'if you were an honorable man you would not have acted in this manner. Why am I made a prisoner in my own apartment; if not with some base design?'

'You wrong me, adorable Rose,' returned Forestier, in a tone and with a look which was at once deprecatory and admiring. 'If some precaution had not been adopted by Madame Ponise at my request, you might have left this house suddenly, and thus be lost to me forever. I have certainly no right thus to curtail your personal liberty, but my ardent love must be my apology. Pardon me, then, sweet Rose, and listen to my vows of unutterable love, and eternal constancy.'

'I accept your apology, sir,' said Rose, 'but I cannot listen to your declaration of regard, my heart being already and irrevocably given to another.'

'I love you with too much ardour to

resign the hope of possessing you so easily,' returned the Frenchman. 'You must be mine, Rose, seek not, therefore to avoid a destiny that is inevitable.'

'Do you threaten?' demanded Rose, drawing herself up and surveying him with sternness.

'Listen, Rose. The name of Forestier, by which you know me, is an assumed one, for in me you behold the Marquis of St. Croix. I am rich—Madame Ponise and daughter are in my interest, and will take care that you do not leave this house, but as my mistress. Judge, then, of what chance you have of successfully resisting me—judge also the advantages you will acquire by resigning yourself to a destiny which you cannot avoid. My wealth will aid my love to surround you with every delight which the heart can desire, or money purchase; you will reside in a pleasantly situated and elegantly furnished house, and have servants and a car-

riage at your command. And you will have—

‘Hold, sir!’ said Rose, interrupting him with calm dignity. ‘I can hear no more; if you are an honorable man you will leave me, and desire Madame Poisson to restore me the freedom which has been denied me to-day.’

‘Ask me anything but to abandon my hopes of possessing you, adorable Rose,’ returned the Marquis, and it shall be granted, if it be within the power of gold aided by the most boundless love, to procure it. But you must not ask me to forego the bliss upon which my heart is fixed, for it will be useless. Spare me, therefore, the pain, which refusing you anything costs me.’

‘Affect not a regard which you do not feel, my lord,’ said Rose. ‘If you really entertained any affection for me, you would not be guilty of the baseness of making me a prisoner.’

‘How can I prove to you the sincerity of my love, Rose?’ said the libertine marquis.

‘By restoring me to the freedom of which, through you, I have been deprived.’

‘And what pledge have I that, when at liberty, you will be more disposed than now to entertain my offer?’ demanded the Marquis, after a brief pause.

‘None,’ replied Rose. ‘I will give no pledge. You have received my final and irrevocable answer to your base proposal.’

‘Then, by heaven! disdainful beauty! you will not leave this room until I have bent you to my steadfast purpose!’ exclaimed the Marquis.

‘Never will I yield! base wretch!’ exclaimed Rose Clinton, coloring with indignation. ‘Nor shall I remain long a prisoner here. My friends in England know that I am here, and the laws will be appealed to, in order to enforce my restoration to liberty.’

‘We shall see,’ returned the marquis, ‘you are as completely in my power as if you were a prisoner in the Bastille, and I were the minister; and should persuasion fail, force shall give you to my arms.’

‘I see you are as much a ruffian as a dissembler,’ observed Rose, turning from him to the window.

‘It grieves me to use threats, fair creature,’ returned St. Croix, ‘and I trust to your good sense, appreciating your position and my offer, to be re-

ceived more kindly, when I visit you to-morrow.’

The marquis bowed politely as he quitted the room, but Rose remained looking from the window until she heard the door close behind him; and then she again gave vent to her agitated feelings in tears.

By degrees her tears ceased to flow, and she fell into a fit of mournful abstraction, from which she was aroused by hearing a slight rustling on the floor near the door of the chamber, as if a piece of paper had been pushed under it; and glancing in that direction, she perceived a letter lying upon the carpet.—Rising quickly, she crossed the room, and picking up the letter, found it addressed to herself. Trembling with the agitation of awakened hope, she opened the letter and read the following lines:—

‘Be comforted; give not way to grief, or despair. An hour after midnight you will be able to open the door of your chamber, and in the gallery of communication between this house and the one at the back, you will find a friend.’

There was no signature, but the writing was neat, and appeared to be that of a female. Rose waited with impatience for the hour of one, without taking off her clothes, and when she heard it boom upon the silence of night from two or three churches, she listened at her door for a moment and finding all still throughout the house, she opened it cautiously. No one was in the passage—she threaded it hastily, and opened the only door which could possibly lead to the gallery spoken of by her unknown correspondent. Here she found a young female of prepossessing countenance, clad in her night clothes, over which she had thrown a shawl, and holding a light in her hand. The female placed her forefinger on her lips to enjoin silence, and led the way through another door, and along a passage to the head of a flight of stairs, down which Rose followed her with noiseless footsteps, and without speaking.

‘I can never repay you this service, and I know not how to thank you,’ said she, as they reached a passage leading to a door, which appeared to open into the street.

‘Do not speak of it, mademoiselle,’ said her conductor, speaking broken English, in a soft low voice. ‘I am amply repaid by the consciousness of having done a good action. I have been

unfortunate myself, and can therefore sympathise with you, for neither my misfortunes nor a vicious career, have stifled the aspirations of my heart after virtue and goodness.'

'Farewell!' said Rose, pressing the young female's hand, as the latter opened the door. 'I shall remember you in my prayers.'

'Farewell!' sighed her unknown friend, and then the door was closed hastily, and Rose was alone in the street.

Hurrying from the vicinity of the Rue d'Englis as if from a lazaret-house, the liberated maiden soon found herself leaving the town behind her; but she had scarce got a mile from Rochefort, when the iron gates on a park were thrown open by the lodge-keeper, and a carriage rolled out. The face of a man appeared at the window, and the voice of the Marquis of St. Croix immediately fell upon the startled ears of Rose Clinton, commanding the coachman to stop. She started, and would have fled, but the marquis, who was returning from a convivial supper party at the house of a brother officer, opened the door, sprang out, and seized her in his arms. She screamed for help, but he quickly stifled her cries by drawing her shawl over her mouth, and lifting her into the carriage, banged the door, and drew up the blinds. The carriage was again got into motion, and Rose was once more in the libertine's power.

* * * *

Seated alone in the silence of night, in the room in which the Marquis of St. Croix had confined her, she heard a grating sound, like that produced by sawing or rasping wood in a stealthy way. Presently it ceased, and in another moment she heard a sound in the room below as if a window opened or closed with caution. Thoughts of burglary and deeds of violence, rushed through her mind, and she rose from her chair and drew the curtains of the window; nothing but the trees waving in the night wind was visible through the obscurity.

Stealthy footsteps ascended the stairs, the door of the chamber was opened, and the Marquis of St. Croix entered. His countenance was flushed with the effects of wine, and he seemed surprised to behold Rose awake and dressed.

'Not yet seeking the sweets of repose, my charming Rose?' said he, holding up a small lamp, which he carried, so as to throw the light upon the maiden's

countenance. 'I fear you still hesitate to trust yourself to my love, but the time has now come when you must decide finally whether you will surrender the fortress of your chastity at discretion or compel me to carry it by storm.'

'I have decided,' returned Rose, firmly, though she trembled so from mental agitation, that she could scarcely stand.

'And what is your decision, lovely creature?'

'You have heard it already—at Rochefort,' replied Rose, turning away from him, as he attempted to take her hand.

'Foolish girl!' said St. Croix, setting the lamp on a table, 'Your obstinacy compels me to take by force what I would fain owe to your appreciation of my offer.'

'Oh, spare me!' cried Rose, in a supplicating tone, as the libertine threw his arms round her waist, and attempted to bear her towards the bed; but finding that he disregarded her entreaties, she gave vent to her alarm in a succession of piercing screams.

The marquis pressed his hand upon her mouth, to stifle her cries, but at the same moment the door was opened, and a man, in the garb of a peasant, entered the room. He was about fifty years of age, his countenance tanned by exposure to the sun and wind, his eyes dark and piercing, and his black hair long and matted, giving an air of savage wildness to his whole appearance. The expression of his countenance was stern, even to ferocity, and he carried in his hand a stout cudgel. Rose could not avoid connecting his sudden appearance with the sounds she had heard, just before the entrance of St. Croix, in the room below, and regarded him as a burglar; but the marquis evidently recognised him, for he started violently, and turned pale the moment he beheld him.

'I see you know me, my lord, said the intruder, in a deep low tone, as he fixed his keen dark eyes upon the marquis; then glancing towards Rose, he added, 'you have not amended your life, I see; but this lady, at least, will not become your victim.'

'And why not, scoundrel?' demanded St. Croix.

'Because I am here,' replied the man, 'and I told you when we last met, that our next meeting would be a terrible one. I am here to take vengeance for the infamous treatment to which you subjected that angel, my poor lost Genevieve.'

"Rascal!" exclaimed the marquis, "you shall swing on the gallows for this burglary and your insolence; the one will conveniently enable me to punish the other."

He advanced toward the bell-rope to summons assistance, but he had not moved a yard before the intruder's cudgel was suddenly raised, and fell so heavily upon the marquis's arm as to elicit from him a cry of pain.

"Villain!" cried the enraged libertine, and, turning quickly round, he drew his sword, and made a furious lunge at the peasant.

The latter parried it with his cudgel, and then stepping back, drew from a leathern belt a Spanish case-knife with his left hand; the marquis repeated the thrust, but the peasant described a circle in the air with his cudgel, and struck the sword from his hand. Then, rapidly transferring the knife to his right hand, he closed with the libertine, and plunged the weapon, to the hilt, in his breast.—He fell instantly, with the blood welling in a crimson torrent from the wound, and while a cry of horror burst from the lips of Rose Clinton, the avenger sheathed his ensanguined knife, threw open the door and bounded down the stairs.

"Joy, joy!" exclaimed Rose, catching eagerly at the prospect of escape thus opened to her, and she sped after the peasant with the celerity of a startled fawn.

She saw the assassin no more—probably he escaped by the same means as he entered; and she heard the servants hurrying about, alarmed by the fall of their master, and the flying footsteps of the peasant and herself. Reaching the vestibule without encountering any one, she quickly unfastened the door of the chateau, and in two minutes after the murder, stood alone in the park. Favored by the darkness, she sped until she reached the low wall which bounded the park, which she mounted, and leaped into the road.

Casting a glance in the direction of the chateau, she beheld a red glare reflected upon the windows, and the idea instantaneously flashed athwart her mind that the murderer of St. Croix had set fire to the house before effecting his escape from it, in order to conceal his crime. Hurrying onward without knowing in what direction, she looked back when at the distance of a mile from the chateau, and saw flames bursting from the windows and glimmering through

the trees, and a red glow reflected upon the sky and hanging like a fiery pall above the scene of crime and destruction.

The approach of day at length enabled Rose Clinton to perceive by the direction posts at the corners of the roads which she passed, that she was going towards Paris, and when the sunbeams awakened the song birds and she began to meet laborers and mechanics proceeding to their toil, the increased light showed her the grey towers of the old cathedral of Notre Dame, and the windmill-crowned heights of Montmartre looming in the distance. Two hours afterwards she entered the suburbs of the metropolis, and overcome by fatigue, enhanced by the deprivation of sleep, which she had lately experienced, she entered a coffee-house, where she rested herself while taking the refreshment which she had ordered.

She now began to reflect upon her position; her flight from the infamous establishment of Madame Ponise had destroyed the only means which Montgomery or her brother possessed of discovering her, and she was now friendless in a foreign land, unacquainted with the language and almost destitute of funds. Her only hope now was that her brother or lover, on arriving at Rochefort, would discover the character of Madame Ponise's house, and thereupon institute such an investigation as would bring them to Paris, they might search long without finding her, and in the meantime she would be penniless, and, as an inevitable consequence, foodless and houseless. She sighed deeply as the probabilities and contingencies of her position passed slowly in review before her mental vision, and when she had sufficiently rested herself, she left the coffee-house, and wandered along the quays between the Louvre and the city.

At the foot of one of the little bridges which form a communication between the banks of the Seine and the low island, on which stand the cathedral of Notre Dame and the maze of narrow, dirty, badly lighted streets called the city, a crowd had collected to witness a pugilistic encounter between two drunken laborers, and in escaping from the throng, the forlorn wanderer was rudely pushed about by a group of dissipated looking, and shabbily dressed fellows. Having at length succeeded in extricating herself from the crowd, Rose entered an eating-house to obtain some refreshment, and upon paying for it, was

struck with surprise and consternation by the discovery, that she had only a couple of francs left. She then called to mind the manner in which she had been hustled in the throng, and had no doubt that her purse, containing a half-livre, had then been abstracted from her pocket, the escape of the silver from the fingers of the pickpocket being owing to its being loose.

She could scarcely refrain from shedding tears at the discovery of the loss which she had sustained, and she now felt more utterly wretched than she ever had before. When night came on, she sought out a cheap, and, therefore, a low lodging-house, where she engaged a single-bedded room, the only one in the house, for though it was a serious drain upon what remained of her two francs, after paying for her dinner, to defray the charge for it, she needed sleep so much that she felt that she should sink down in the streets if she did not obtain a lodging, and her pure mind and innate modesty, shrank from the thought of undressing before, and sleeping in the same room with, a dozen persons of both sexes, none of them remarkable for purity of morals; but rather the reverse.

She slept soundly, despite the misery which environed and threatened to engulf her, and on the following morning, when she had left the lodging-house, she breakfasted upon a slice of bread and a sous' worth of milk, and resumed her wandering through the city. All that day she wandered about the streets, and at night she rested upon a door-step until roused by the watch, and then walked about the dark and deserted streets until morning. The few sous which she still possessed were parted with during that day for bread, and all the horrors that can possibly beset a young female, without resources, and ignorant of the language, and thus alone in the midst of a great city, now stared her in the face.

It was on the second night which she passed in the streets of Paris that while wandering in the fauxbourg St. Antoine, she was rescued from ruffians, by Ernest Montgomery, as related in a previous chapter; but she did not, as the reader is already aware, recognise her lover on that occasion. The morning found her awakening to hunger and misery upon a heap of decaying leaves, in the herb market, and from thence she dragged her weary limbs to the bridge called after the reigning monarch, resolved to solicit charity of the passengers who crossed it, trusting to the genuine

and unadorned eloquence of pale cheeks, upon which famine was battering, to supply the disadvantage under which she laboured, of not understanding the language.

It was some time before she could summon courage to hold out her hand, and raise her mild blue eyes to the countenance of the person whose benevolence she thus mutely appealed to, and when she did so, it met with no response. The person whom she accosted was a wealthy banker, a man whose name was all-powerful upon the Bourse; he paused not even to cast a look upon the maiden's misery-stricken countenance, but buttoned up his pockets, as if he feared she would attempt to rob him, and went on. The next whom she accosted was a moustached officer of the king's foreign guard—Swiss and German mercenaries who sold themselves to the cause of despotism; he stared rudely in her face, and then, twirling his moustache, went his way, humming an air from the last new opera. The maiden's heart sunk within her, but she thought she would not yet despair, and seeing an elderly man of grave demeanour, and wearing the garb of a high dignitary of the church of Rome, approach, she extended her open hand, and raised her Madona-like eyes to his countenance with an imploring expression, more eloquent than the most touching verbal appeal. But the churchman rebuked her for laziness, though the unfortunate girl understood not the import of his harshly-spoken words, and, like the Levite of old, passed by on the other side.

Yet, in an hour afterwards, the banker was eating peaches which cost a livre the plate, the moustached officer was squandering his pay at the faro table, and the priest was folded in the arms of a meretricious courtesan, a dancer of the royal opera, for whom he maintained a carriage and servants.

The pale victim of adverse circumstances was well nigh starving, and not one of the rich, who passed her by, would give a sous from the superfluity of which they wasted in extravagance and debauchery, to save her from despair, from starvation, from prostitution or suicide.

And, while famishing Virtue was thus frowned upon on the Pont Louis XV., Vice, clothed in purple and fine linen, in velvet and satin, and decked with stars and crosses, with feathers and jewels, was feasted, flattered, and

idolized at the Louvre—nay, even on the courtiezans who promenaded the colonnade of the opera-house, silks rustled and jewels blazed.

What a fearful contrast! How worthy the consideration of the moralist! How full of interest to the social philosopher! We are told that the virtuous shall receive a crown of glory in the future beyond the grave, but we know that in this world virtue is neglected, and if associated with poverty, trampled upon and despised. For the virtuous poor, poverty and despair; for the profligate rich, affluence and luxury: such is the hideous formula of the present! We raise the scaffold for the poor criminal, while the rich one escapes; we vaunt the virtues of the affluent and record them on marble, but not a word of the virtues of the poor—of their enduring patience under privation, their sterling probity, their genuine moral worth.

It is only in the statistics of poverty and crime that the rich hear of the poor—it is only through their despair-prompted insurrections, in poll-tax rebellions, and in *Jacqueries*, in French revolutions and Manchester massacres, in Rathcoormac tithie affrays, and Bradford *emeutes*, that history mentions the most numerous, and most useful order in the social hierarchy. Poverty has been, through countless ages, crucified on the bloody cross of class-legislation; and commercial competition, now sinking under the fetters of feudal tyranny, and now trodden under the iron heel of selfish capital: and still the cross stands on the moral Calvary of social error; still, in the language of a poet, whose works are not yet known and appreciated as they deserve to be:—

‘The thieves are wanted on either hand.’

Fainting with hunger and fatigue, Rose sank upon a seat in a recess upon the bridge, and tears flowed fast down her cheeks. Thoughts of suicide entered her brain as she looked down upon the dark waters rolling through the narrow arches. At first she shuddered at the thought, but soon the idea grew familiar. At length she placed her right foot upon the parapet, and though she yet hesitated, despair was prompting her to take the desperate leap, and in another moment she would have been drifting with the dark under-currents; but on the very brink of eternity, a voice reached her ears, crying in piercing accents:—

‘Hold!’

She drew back with a shudder; and

in another moment she was enfolded in the arms of Ernest Montgomery.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SOLITARY TRAVELLER.

OUR scene now changes to the valley of the Mississippi, not far from the borders of Mexico, and in front of a lone farm house, which nestled in secluded beauty, in the bosom of that lovely vale. It was the hour of sunset, and the labors of the day had been brought to a close.

On a bench near the door sat an elderly man, and a woman nearly as old, the former smoking his pipe, and the latter sitting with her hands clasped over her knees, the fading light having compelled her to lay aside her knitting needles, which lay on the bench by her side. A young woman, who might easily have been known as the daughter of the elder female, was standing in the rustic porch, holding in her arms a child of six weeks old, and a tall young man was leaning over the gate, which gave admission to the little garden from the fields, contemplating the beauties of the sun-dyed sky, and the distant landscape.

Beyond the fields, which no hedge-row divided, stretched the undulating prairie on every side, here blending with the dusky hue of the ploughed land, and then shading off into the dark green livery of the clumps of shrubs and stately maple and oak trees which varied the landscape.

To the north the Mississippi, though distant, was seen gliding like a golden serpent under a carpet of emerald green velvet, as its waters gleamed in the sheen of the declining sun, and, beyond the river, the rolling prairies of Illinois were blended by the mists of evening with the darkening sky. Towards the west, the snowy peaks of Rocky Mountains were just seen, tinted with the roseate glow of sunset, and on every other side the prospect was bounded by dark forests, whose intricacies were known only to the Red Indian and the grisly bear.

Gradually, as the sun sank to rest beyond the distant mountains, their craggy peaks changed their color from rose to grey, the Mississippi became scarce distinguishable from the prairie through which it meandered, and the distant forests, and the clumps of shrubs and trees

in the middle distance became darker every moment.

The fields around the farm, and the far-stretching prairie beyond, became of a uniform darkness, and the darkness that first gathered in the east spread over the entire canopy of the universe, as the last tinge of orange faded out in the west. Then the air began to be damp and chilly, and the young mother beneath the rustic porch, withdrew with her babe into the house, and was speedily followed by the old people and the young man. Then the door was closed and the bolts drawn within, and all was still, save the trees that waved and murmured in the night breeze.

The darkness deepened for a time, and then uprose in the east the silver luminary of night, and beneath her beams the varied landscape underwent another change.

The peaks of the distant mountains changed from grey to a pure white, except where some cleft or hollow lay in shadow, and were distinctly defined against the deep blue sky; the Mississippi now shone in the distance, like a thread of silver, and the forests changed the sombre aspect, which they had assumed under the veil of darkness, for the olivish tint which distant verdure receives from the moonbeams, when seen through the mists of night. The inmates of the lonely farm-house were now retired to rest, the cattle were asleep in stall and fold, and only the prowling robber and the wild denizens of the forest were abroad.

The silver moon had nearly completed her nightly course, and was resting on the the snow-capped pinnacles of the Rocky Mountains, when a solitary traveller approached the lone farm-house from the north. He was young, as far as the lapse of years was concerned, but there were furrows on the pale brow which had not been traced by time, and lines about the mouth which spoke of the past action of strong passions, as plainly as the indurate lava on the sides of Iceland's volcanic mount indicates the hidden fire within. His complexion was fair and florid, and his eyes blue; his light brown hair was long and matted, his whiskers were exuberant, and his beard did not appear to have been shaved for several weeks.—An air of wildness was thus given to his countenance, the general expression of which, as he dragged himself wearily onward over the moon-lit prairie, was one indicative of that recklessness of

self and dissatisfaction with the world, which is often the first stage in the return of the sinner to the straight path from which he has wandered.

The garb of the traveller evinced that if the idea of his state of mind conveyed by the expression of his countenance was correct, he had not forsaken the flowery path of sin, and grown weary of the world until the latter had frowned upon him, and that negative state which is a mere abstinence from vicious acts had become a necessity with him. His hat was crushed and napless, his black silk neckcloth was tied loosely and carelessly, and as much as was visible of his shirt was yellow and dingy. He wore no waistcoat, and his thread-bare blue coat, ragged at the elbows, and under the arms, was buttoned tightly across his chest. His corduroy lower garments were in a somewhat better condition, but much changed from their original color, which had been white, by stains of wine and beer; and his well-worn boots were covered with dust, and tied together with strings to prevent an untoward separation of the sole and the upper leather.

As he drew near the lone farm-house, which we have described, the traveller muttered to himself—

‘Here, then I shall be able to supply my necessities, God knows they are great, or I would not commit another crime to satisfy them. But it shall be the last; I shall find a rifle within, for no farmer is without one in these solitudes, and farther and farther yet I shall find some place where the white man’s foot has never trod, and where I may live sinless and yet free.’

He stepped over the stake fence, and approached the house; there were no shutters to the windows, either within or without, for no thief was apprehended in that secluded spot, and the traveller easily opened the casement with a knife which he took from a pocket in his ragged and threadbare coat. He looked into the room, and then he entered, but repassed the window again in a few minutes, with his countenance so pale and agitated that its expression was entirely changed.

‘Here!’ he muttered to himself, as he strode rapidly across the fields, under the influence of intense excitement.—‘Here, in the solitude of the wilderness to meet him! I would not face him for all the diamonds of Golconda, nor for worlds would I deprive him of augh,

that his industry has gained him, though but of the value of a solitary penny.'

He stopped suddenly in what might almost be regarded as a flight, and then he returned towards the house, more slowly, and taking his knife from his pocket again, he carved with it the Roman letters R. C., on the smooth trunk of a lime tree, near the little gate over which the young farmer had leaned when contemplating the setting sun. Then he replaced the knife in his pocket, and went his way again; and when he had got a mile from the place, he sat down upon a grassy hillock, and looked back upon the spot.

'There must surely be happiness,' said he in a murmuring tone, 'but it is not for me to share it. I should feel like Satan when he witnessed the felicity of the first human pair before the fall, I must go on—but what shall I do in the wilderness without a rifle? I shall be unable to procure food, unable to protect myself from the red savage or the shaggy bear. I must have a rifle—and, to possess one, a new crime must be committed; such is my unhappy destiny.'

He covered his face with his hands, and sat some time in silence; then he rose with a sigh, and, without looking back any more, resumed his weary journey across the moonlit prairie.

On the third morning after the night on which the incidents occurred which are related above a gentleman and lady, attended by two grooms in livery, were cantering along the skirts of the prairie about forty miles to the south of the solitary farm-house there described, and consequently within the frontier of Mexico. The gentleman seemed about sixty years of age, was dark-complexioned, and had evidently been handsome in his youth; his dark eyes still retained their pristine brightness, though age had silvered his hair, and his teeth were still in excellent preservation. The lady was young, little more than eighteen, and her figure, as she sat on horseback, seemed slight and graceful, admirably proportioned, and of womanly maturity of developement. The form of her countenance was nearly a perfect oval, her complexion dark, with a roseate tinge upon the cheeks, her eyes dark as night, and brilliant as its stars, and her hair black, as jet, glossy as the raven's wing, and soft and fine, as silk. Her dark green riding habit set off her superbly modelled form to the greatest advantage, and the bracing air of an autumnal morning, and the exhilaration of a canter

over the verdant prairie had imparted a healthful carnation glow to her dark cheeks, and given additional brilliance to her sparkling eyes.

'Whom have we here?' exclaimed the gentleman, reining his horse, as his eyes fell upon the form of a shabbily dressed young man lying beneath a tree, apparently dead. 'Dismount, Rodrigo, and see if he breathes,' he added, as the grooms rode up.

It was the wanderer whom we have described in the preceding chapter; his countenance was paler, his beard longer, and his whole appearance more indicative of want, now, than then. His eyes were closed, his limbs cold, and his ragged clothes and matted hair covered with moisture; and when Rodrigo sprang from his horse, knelt by his side, and placed his hand upon the stranger's heart, its pulsations were scarcely perceptible.

'His heart beats, senor, but very feebly,' said the groom. 'He is quite cold, too; and seems to have laid here some time.'

'Let us take the poor young man with us father,' said the young lady. 'Timely assistance may yet save his life.'

'You have but anticipated my intentions. Inez,' returned the gentleman. 'Stay you with him, Rodrigo; raise his head and chafe his hands, and we will gallop homeward, and send wine and a litter to remove him.'

The other groom then took charge of Rodrigo's horse, and Inez and her father galloped towards their mansion, which stood at the distance of three or four miles from the spot where the inanimate form of the traveller had been discovered.

Rodrigo continued his exertions to restore animation until the arrival of his fellow-groom and a stout negro, with a litter and some wine, and was rewarded, as they came up, by the stranger slowly opening his eyes. He was unable to speak, but swallowed the wine which they poured into his mouth, and then they placed him in the litter, and trotted off with him to the mansion of Don Ramon Válesquez, the father of the dark-eyed Inez.

The stranger was then carried up stairs, undressed by Don Ramon's valet and placed in a warm bed, after which a cup of warm gruel, with a glass of wine in it, was poured down his throat, and the curtains being drawn around

the comfortable bed, he was left alone to sleep.

And sleep he did until a late hour in the afternoon, and when he awakened having no distinct recollection of his removal, he lay for some time silent and motionless, unable to comprehend how he had come there. He felt stronger than when he had sunk down upon the prairie exhausted by hunger and fatigue, and happening to touch his face, he found that he had been shaved while he slept.

He drew the curtain, at length, and saw that he was in a comfortably furnished chamber; all this was incomprehensible to him. But while he was gazing with a curious and puzzled countenance around him, he heard the door opened cautiously, and light feet gliding softly over the thick carpet.—Another moment, and his astonished eyes fell upon the loveliest female form his vision had ever beheld; at least, so thought the poor traveller.

It was Donna Inez; she now wore a rich silk dress, and a cornelian cross, attached to a gold chain, hung upon her bosom. Her long black hair fell in a shower of ringlets upon her shoulders, and while the unexpected glance which the stranger threw upon her heightened the color upon her brunette cheeks, the pleasure which she derived from the conviction that the humane exertions made to revive him had not been unavailing, enhanced the lustre of her fine dark eyes.

‘I am pleased to see you so much recovered, senor,’ said she, with some confusion, for she had thought when she entered the chamber that the stranger was asleep.

‘Your kindness has saved me from death, senor,’ said the poor stranger, his grateful feelings evidenced in his tone, and in the expression of his blue eyes. ‘But for you I should have perished on the prairie, where I sank down, overpowered by famine and fatigue. For the inestimable service which you have rendered me, I shall never be able adequately to express my thanks.’

‘We did but our duty as Christians, senor, in affording you the succor which you needed,’ returned Donna Inez. ‘I will inform my father that you have awakened, and are much recovered, and I am sure he will hasten to offer his congratulations.’

The beautiful Spaniard glided from the room as she spoke, the stranger followed her with his eyes as she retired,

until the door closed gently behind her. Then he heaved a sigh, and began to reflect upon his position. He was a stranger in the land, penniless and destitute, and worn down by famine and fatigue; and all at once, in the hour of his greatest extremity, he found himself among friends, who tended him as if he were a beloved member of their own family—yet, to whom he was so much a stranger—as if he was the Khan of Tartary or the Dalai Lama. Might not this be rendered the commencement of a new phase in his existence? He felt that it might, and thought of the Shakespearian aphorism, that—

‘There is a tide in the affairs of men

Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.

Yet he could devise no plan for the future, and trusting to the chapter of accidents for the consequences of his present position, he regarded himself, adhering to the doctrine of fatalism which he had held through life, as a lava-stone which cast up from the fiery centre of the volcano, has no choice as to where it will fall.

His reflections were interrupted by the entrance of the hospitable Spaniard, who congratulated him upon his resuscitation, and to whom he repeated his sincere and fervent thanks for the exercise of the humanity which had saved him.

The Don soon left him, fearful of exhausting his wearied stranger guest by a too long conversation, and the latter relapsed into the reverie from which his host's entrance had roused him. Gradually his thoughts settled upon Donna Inez, and as his imagination dwelt upon her rare beauty of countenance, the matchless grace and symmetry of form, the sweetness and intelligence that beamed from her dark eyes, and the unaffected modesty of demeanor that surrounded her, as with a halo of light, he thought that, were it possible for him to return to an honorable course of life, Donna Inez would be the fair one whom he would select for a wife. But his condition was as abject as that of the beggar who extends his hand for charity in the street, and how was it to be improved?

By honest labor—it is true he possessed some knowledge of agriculture, but how could this avail him without land upon which to apply it? Should he become a mere laborer, after living like a gentleman, both in Loudon and New York?

He was not above labor, but he liked

not the idea of toiling for another, more than for his own, and being forced in his old age, to seek an asylum in the poor-house. Besides he could not hope to gain the hand of Donna Inez unless he represented himself as a gentleman; but then how did he know that the lady was not already affianced to some young and handsome Spaniard?

In the midst of such reflections as these he fell asleep, and slept soundly until the following morning. He then felt so much recovered that he resolved to rise to breakfast, and having expressed his desire to his host, who came to his chamber to ascertain the progress which his guest had made towards convalescence, the worthy hidalgo immediately sent his valet with clean linen and clothes from his own wardrobe.

The appearance of the stranger, shaved and well dressed, was now so much improved that he could scarcely be recognised as the houseless wanderer who had been brought to the house in rags and wearing a beard of a month's growth.

Having descended to the breakfast parlor, he had the pleasure of again beholding the beautiful Donna Inez, who did the honors of the table, and towards whom he felt himself irresistibly attached. After breakfast he accompanied Inez and her father into the garden, and while slowly pacing its gravelled walks and well-kept lawns he related to them the history of his life, omitting some portions, however, glossing over others, and sometimes substituting feigned motives and causes for the real ones, well knowing that the entire truth would not tend to raise him in the estimation of his friends.

He told them that he was a native of England, and named Richard Glindon; and that he was the son of a gentleman of property, but having been very gay, and dissipated a considerable portion of his patrimony in gambling and extravagant living, he had at length resolved upon a complete reformation, and in order thereto had realised the remainder of his paternal estate, with the view of buying land in America, and devoting himself to a useful and reputable course of life, far from the contagion of the gay society of the English capital. The vessel in which he had crossed the Atlantic had been wrecked, he said, on the American coast, and he had been washed ashore insensible, recovering to find himself completely destitute in a land in which he was an utter stranger.

He had a brother who had emigrated a few years before, but he knew not where to find him, and it was in searching for him that, exhausted by fatigue and want of food, he had sunk down to die, as he thought, upon the prairie.

This narrative increased the interest with which the hidalgo and his lovely daughter already regarded him, and the former in the most generous manner, and with a delicacy that enhanced the value of the offer, placed his purse at the command of his unfortunate guest, and insisted upon his making his house his home until he was sufficiently recovered to pursue his search for his brother.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE NIGHT ATTACK.

SEVERAL days passed on, during which Richard Glindon remained the guest of the hospitable Spanish hidalgo, and he was at length well, and began to talk of prosecuting his search for his brother.— But the daily opportunities he had had of seeing and conversing with Donna Inez, had caused the image of the dark-eyed Spanish maiden to sink deeper into his heart in proportion as he became more and more acquainted with the sweetness and amiability of her disposition, and the graces and fascinations of manner; and while the sincere and ardent passion with which she had inspired him, strengthened those aspirations after virtue which had come upon him oftener, and with more force, since his departure from New York, he was rendered restless by the desire of attaining a position in which he could entertain the hope of making the lovely Inez his wife.

At length the day was fixed for his departure, but before its dawn an event occurred which detained him at the hidalgo's villa for a considerable time longer.

It was the evening before the day upon which he intended to set out in quest of his brother, as he assured his kind entertainers, but in reality to seek his fortune in the wide world, and either forget the dark-eyed Inez in years of vicissitude, or attain a position in which he could venture to ask her hand of the proud, though kind hearted Spaniard.— He was absorbed and thoughtful that evening, for he could not conceal from

himself the fact that he fondly loved the beautiful daughter of his host, and the thought that he might never behold her again after the morrow pained him.—Inez and her father perceived his abstraction, and the latter asked his daughter to favor them with some music, upon which the lovely girl sat down at her harp, the strings of which she swept with a masterly hand, accompanying it with her voice.

But, all at once, a loud, wild, unearthly yell, like the charging shout of the infernal host, rose without the mansion, and Inez gave utterance to a faint shriek, as the color suddenly faded from her cheek, and the vibrations of the musical strings died away.

All three looked at each other for a moment in silence, and before they had recovered from the shock which that yell had given their nerves, five or six female servants rushed in, pale and breathless with terror, loudly exclaiming:—

‘The Indians! the Indians!’

‘Santa Maria!’ cried Donna Inez, clasping her hands. ‘What shall we do?’

‘Where are Diego and the rest?’ inquired her father of the terrified females.

‘Diego alone is in the house, and he is rummaging for weapons, sir,’ gasped one of the pale and trembling female servants.

Diego now entered with two fowling-pieces, a carbine, and a brace of pistols, and at the same moment another tremendous yell, louder than the previous one, struck upon their startled ears.

‘Thank heaven, we are well provided with arms!’ exclaimed Richard Glindon, springing from his seat. ‘If our ammunition fail not, we will beat off the rascals. Are all the outer doors secured?’

‘Every one locked, bolted, and barred,’ said Diego.

‘How many of the redskins are there?’ asked Glindon.

‘Fifty at the very least, senor,’ replied Diego. ‘They already swarm round the house.’

‘We will give them a warm reception, senor,’ said the young Englishman to his host. ‘How are the fellows armed, Diego?’

‘Indifferently,’ replied the man, ‘they have only their tomahawks and scalping-knives, and their bows and arrows.’

‘Come on, then!’ exclaimed Glindon,

and giving one of the pistols and a fowling piece to the hidalgo, and the carbine to Diego, he took the remaining gun and pistol himself, and led the way up the stairs.

The trembling women followed them, with Donna Inez in the midst, and while these shut themselves up in the attar’s chamber, the hidalgo, Glindon, and Diego crept cautiously up to the window of an apartment in the rear, and peered forth in the darkness. There was no moon, but the faint light shed over the scene without, from countless stars, enabled them to see a strong party of Indians swarming along the rear of the mansion, the foremost of them beginning to assail the door and windows of the kitchen and other buildings in the rear.

The mansion being built in the form of the letter L, and these buildings forming the bottom of the letter, they were commanded by the back windows of the body of the mansion; and Glindon proposed that the lower sash should be raised a few inches, and a volley fired among the dusky forms of the fierce marauders.

The hidalgo approved of the plan, and the sash being gently raised, three barrels were brought to bear upon the enemy, and in a moment there was a red flash, three sharp reports, and a cloud of smoke, followed by a savage yell from the Indians; who were thrown into temporary confusion by the sudden discharge.

Glindon and his two companions withdrew from the window the moment they had pulled trigger, but the enemy had marked the direction in which the shots came, and in a moment a dozen arrows entered the window, shattering the glass, and sticking in the opposite wall. The little garrison reloaded, while the blows of axes upon the back doors and windows redoubled, and then cautiously creeping to the window, they raised their heads to take aim, and again fired.

Another yell rose from the Indians, and the defenders hastened to reload, but the kitchen door broke down with a loud crash at that moment, and they hurried to the staircase leading from the hall to the kitchen. The Indians were already at the foot when they reached the head of the staircase, but a well directed volley checked their advance for a moment, which the garrison availed themselves of to erect a barricade of tables and chairs at the head of the stairs.

from behind which they might fire upon the Indians.

A volley of arrows came whistling up the stairs before the barricade was completed, and Glindon, who had exposed himself to the enemy's fire in erecting it, received one of them in his right arm. Pulling it out, he answered the savage yell of the Indians with a 'hurrah!' and in a moment after, the foremost of the foe fell beneath the deliberate aim which the defenders were now enabled to take from behind their hastily constructed barricade.

The yelling horde drew back, but soon returned to the assault with more fury than ever, and discharging a shower of arrows, rushed up the stairs, brandishing their tomahawks, and uttering the most frightful and discordant sounds.

Another volley decimated the close column of the fierce-looking Pawnees, as they ascended the stairs, but their advance was only for a moment checked, then the blows of their axes resounded upon the barricade. The defenders fell back to avoid the arrows which were aimed at them, and ascending the great staircase, formed a more solid barricade at the head, while the Indians were forcing the other.

As soon as the painted and crested barbarians appeared at the foot of the stairs, a volley saluted them from above, and one of the shots striking their chief, he fell dead in the hall, and his wild followers immediately retreated to the lower part of the house, carrying his body with them.

Diego was then sent to the window of a room at the back, to reconnoitre, and soon returned with the gratifying intelligence that the Indians had evacuated the house, and were slowly retreating through the garden carrying with them their dead.

Don Jose then proceeded to his daughter's chamber, to announce the defeat and flight of the enemy, and the terrified females issued forth to congratulate the victors. Inez turned pale when she perceived that Glindon was wounded, and hastened to bind up his injured arm with her own fair hands.—The young Englishman began to feel faint from the loss of blood; and by the advice of his kind friends retired to rest, the hidalgo and Diego sitting up the remainder of the night, to be prepared for resistance in case the Indians should return.

On the following morning Glindon's arm was swelled, and in much pain,

and he had a considerable degree of fever; medical attendance was obtained, and the fever abated gradually as the wound healed, but nearly a fortnight elapsed before he was able to leave the villa.

During the time which elapsed between the night attack of the Pawnees on the mansion of Don Jose, and the departure of Richard Glindon, the impression which the ripened charms of the beautiful Inez had made upon the young Englishman's heart was deepened by the assiduity with which she tended him until his recovery from the effects of his wound, and more than once he had half determined to reveal to her the feelings with which she had inspired him.

But his destitute condition, and a sense of unworthiness which sometimes came upon him as he thought upon his past career, and contrasted it with the purity which enshrined the lovely Inez, as in a glory of golden rays, prevented him from uttering the confession of love which rose to his lips, and though it must have sometimes escaped through his eyes without his will, it had not been couched in words when he parted from the maiden and her father.

Provided by the kind hearted Spaniard with a good horse and a considerable sum of money, Richard Glindon set out in quest of adventures, abandoning himself, as he believed, to the guidance of a blind chance; and wandered through Texas and the Mexican province, bordering on the gulf of Florida, which countries were then subject to the yoke of Spain.

A month after his departure from the mansion of Don Jose, he found himself one evening traversing a forest which seemed illimitable, while the light faded from the sky every moment, and the path grew narrower, and more obstructed by bushes and prickly creeping plants at every step. At length the track became obliterated altogether, and he became convinced that he must have been misinformed or mistaken as to the route; to add to his perplexity, it was growing dark, to retrace his steps would take him until morning, and he heard at intervals the low growling of wild beasts, as they roamed through the forest in search of prey.

Whether he returned to the village from whence he had started in the morning, or endeavored to find some other path, he would have to pass the night in the forest, and he, therefore determined

to halt as soon as he could find a convenient spot for his bivouac.

Dismounting from his horse, he led the animal forward, and, hearing at a little distance the murmuring of a stream, he shaped his course in that direction. Pushing his way with some difficulty through the tangled undergrowth of shrubs, creeping plants, and rank grass, he at length came to the banks of the stream, which was of some width, but shallow, and broken into a series of rapids by the irregularities of its rocky bed.

Mounting his steed, he rode through the water, and dismounted on the opposite bank, where an open space of level greensward extended about thirty feet along the stream, and five times that distance into the forest.

Tying his horse to a tree, he cropped an armful of the luxuriant herbage for the animal's supper, after allowing it to drink at the stream, and then collected a quantity of dry wood to form a fire, which is necessary when bivouacing in the woods, to deter wild beasts from approaching.

Having kindled his fire, which soon blazed up, he supped on some cold hunter's beef and bread which he had in his pocket, to which he added a dram of brandy, and then laid down to rest near the fire.

The stars were peeping forth when he fell asleep, wrapped in his ample cloak, and they were fading before the dawning light of the luminary of day when he awoke.

After breakfasting upon the remains of his beef and bread, and taking another sup of brandy, he saddled his horse, and was about to mount, when he perceived, at a little distance, a large square stone, which the darkness had prevented him from observing on the previous night.

The regular form of the stone induced him to approach it, and he then discovered, to his astonishment, that it not only bore evident marks of having been hewn from a quarry, but bore a knot of serpents rudely sculptured on its smoothest side.

After examining this sculptured stone for some moments, and gazing on it with profound astonishment, he walked to the end of the grassy indentation, to ascertain if any other monument of the ancient civilization of Mexico was to be discovered in the neighborhood. He soon perceived through the trees, the crumbling remains of a massive stone

wall, almost concealed by the flowering shrubs, and climbing, creeping, trailing plants, which grew in the crevices.—Running to the bank of the river, Glindon tied up his horse again, and then hastened to the scene of his discoveries, to pursue them further.

Pushing into the forest, he passed the mouldering wall, and beheld the remains of ancient buildings extending much further than he could see, mingled with, and partly concealed by the trees and shrubs which had grown since the plowshare of ruin had passed over the spot, and levelled with the ground the temples and palaces of some unrecorded epoch.

Here rose a massive but crumbling wall, with broken Cyclopean arches, and there the remains of some temple of the ancient deities of the Mexicans, in the form of a truncated pyramid. On one side was a dilapidated tower, sculptured on every side with figures of monkeys, alligators, serpents, and tortoises; and on another an arched gateway, with grotesque heads, frowning or grinning in stone over the entrance, which might, in former times, have afforded ingress to the court-yard of a palace.

He entered the ruined temple, and gazed around him; it was open to the deep-blue sky, the roof having either been destroyed in the calamity which had caused the city to be abandoned, or fallen in since, and the beams of the rising sun, penetrating the trees without, shed a roseate glow upon the crumbling walls and broken arches. Shrubs were growing out of the dilapidated pavement, and monuments of antiquity were strewn in every direction, and nearly concealed by the luxuriant herbage. There was the sacrificial altar, upon which victims had probably been offered to the sun, ages before Columbus ploughed the western wave in quest of a new world—there was the rudely carved idol, which monarchs had probably knelt before, but which now lay prostrate, with one arm broken off—there were the broken stone stairs by which, centuries before, the officiating priest had ascended to the roof, to offer worship to the luminary of day.—Glindon felt a vague sensation of awe creep over him, as he trod the broken pavement of this temple of a worn-out faith, and emerging from it into what had once been a spacious square, he proceeded to examine another mass of ruins, which, from their extent, and the richness of the sculptural decorations

on the outside, he conjectured to have been a palace of some Mexican Cacique.

Passing through a wide doorway, the jambs of which were elaborately carved, he traversed several spacious apartments, all roofless and dismantled, and with the broken pavement concealed with rank grass, and the crumbling walls veiled beneath a verdant and flowery curtain of climbing and trailing plants. Then he came to a range of square columns, the capitals of which were ornamented with figures of twisted serpents in bold relief, enclosing a quadrangle, the pavement of which was formed of square stones, each having four tortoises sculptured upon it, their heads meeting in the centre. Crossing this quadrangle, he passed through a doorway into a large room in better preservation than the rest of the building; the ceiling was almost entire, and richly painted, and there was a stone staircase, with carved balustrades, leading to a smaller room above. Opposite the staircase, was an arched doorway, at the head of a flight of stone steps leading downward, and being curious to examine the subterranean to which they led, Glindon struck a light, kindled a fire of dry twigs, and then lighted a branch of a resinous tree, which formed an excellent torch. Holding this before him, he descended the steps, and entered a small vaulted apartment, the upper part of the walls of which were ornamented with the sculptured figures of human skulls and the heads of monkeys, disposed alternately. But what chiefly attracted his attention were three earthen jars, which stood at the further end of the vault, and which, on examining them by the light of his torch, he found to be full of golden ornaments.

His eyes sparkled as he gazed upon these treasures of the old Caciques of the country, those numerous bracelets, armlets, ear-rings and nose-rings, fillets for the heads of priests, and suns for the breasts of warriors, heaped in glittering confusion within those earthen jars.— They were all of solid and pure gold, and he estimated the aggregate value at more than ten thousand pounds sterling. He could not carry this bulk of gold away, but the ruins were unknown and unsuspected, and the treasures would be safe there until he could return, and remove it. Consoling himself with this reflection for being obliged to leave it, he retraced his way through the ruins to the spot where he had left his horse, and

resumed his wanderings. By noon he regained the track from which he had wandered on the previous evening, and learning from a priest, whom he met, that a Spanish regiment had just entered the next village, he rode towards it with the hastily formed resolution of joining it as a volunteer.

CHAPTER XX.

THE ALLIGATOR'S SWAMP.

Before the sun went down on the day that Richard Glindon discovered the ruins in the forest, he was enrolled in a regiment of his Catholic Majesty's infantry as a volunteer, and learned that it was marching against a village a few leagues distant, the inhabitants of which, incited by an officer dismissed the service for bad conduct, had risen in rebellion against the crown and government of Charles IV. On the following morning intelligence was brought to the commanding officer that the rebels, reinforced by a number of Indians, had fortified their village, and that their leader, Don Guzman Villareale, was determined to defend it to the last extremity. Colonel Lopez was unprovided with artillery, and the rebels were numerically stronger than the force at his disposal, but the latter disadvantage was counterbalanced by the want of discipline among the rebels, and he resolved to attack them at once, before they became sufficiently bold and numerous to act on the offensive.

About noon the regiment reached the village, where they found a wide and deep trench cut across the road, with a rampart of earth on the farther side, from behind which they were saluted by an irregular fire of musketry. 'Forward!' cried Colonel Lopez, waving his sword, and officers and men followed him, a few leaping over the trench, but most of them leaping into it. The defenders continued to fire, but still more irregularly, and with less effect; one of the officers who had leaped the ditch, however, was shot dead, and the first dozen who mounted the rampart of earth shared the same fate, or were knocked upon the head when they leaped among the rebels.

Glindon had leaped across, but slipped back into the trench, and the colonel fell on his hands and knees by his side.— Scrambling up the bank again, they

waved their swords to encourage the men to follow them, and as a great many had succeeded in obtaining a footing on the earthen-mound, a heavy fire was opened upon the rebels. They soon began to retreat towards the village, but not until Colonel Lopez had been borne to the rear, mortally wounded, upon which the command devolved upon Major Rodil. The whole regiment now scrambled over the earthwork, and advanced with fixed bayonets towards the village, where Don Guzman Villareale was forming the rebels behind a barricade.

The barricade was formed of casks, filled with stones, and on the top waved the red flag of the rebels, who fired upon the military from behind, as the latter advanced. The regiment attacked the barricade boldly and in good order, but it was so strongly constructed and so well defended that they were compelled, after a sharp conflict, in which Major Rodil was shot dead, to fall back. They retreated as far as the trench, where they halted by a command of Captain Cordova, who had assumed the direction of affairs, and a council of war was hastily called, which Glindon was invited to attend.

Cordova proposed to blockade the place, and starve the rebels into submission, but the young Englishman recommended that artillery should be procured, the rebels being well provisioned, having driven all the cattle in the neighborhood into the village, and this proposal was adopted.

The regiment returned to the village whence it had marched that morning, and two pieces of artillery were sent for, which, arriving in a couple of days, the rebel village was again invested.

By means of the cannon the barricade was soon destroyed, and the soldiers entered the village, the rebels retreating into the church. The building was surrounded, and the siege being now converted into a blockade, the rebels soon became pressed for food, and on the night of the third day they made a sally; but, after a sharp conflict, Don Guzman Villareale was captured by Glindon, and many of his followers were made prisoners or killed.

The rest sought refuge in the church again, and closed the doors; but, rendered desperate by famine, they sallied out again on the following day, when a great many were killed, and the unfortunate remnant surrendered at discretion.

Owing to the loss of superior officers in the suppression of this revolt, promotions followed throughout the regiment, and Glindon was rewarded for his services with the rank and pay of captain.

* * * *

One evening, two or three weeks after these occurrences, Captain Glindon was riding towards the mansion of his friend, Don Jose, and had reached a place called Alligators' Swamp, from its being infested with the reptiles from which it derived its name, about a quarter of a mile from the home of her, at the recollection of whose image, his eyes sparkled, and his heart beat quickly.

The sun was setting in the golden west, and the evening breeze was sighing among the foliage of the rhododendron and the kalmia, the bright blossoms of which loaded the air with fragrance. The swamp was bordered by trees, and the tall reeds and rushes were waving and rustling in the breeze, but all beside was still.

All at once Glindon heard a piercing shriek proceed from among the trees, and, springing from his horse, he ran along the edge of the swamp, and soon beheld a young female clinging in terror to a tree, and a large alligator making its way towards her.

The first glance which the young Englishman threw towards the terrified female told him that she was pre-eminently beautiful, the second conveyed the assurance that it was Donna Inez whom he beheld exposed to such imminent peril.

Throwing himself between the huge reptile and the Donna, he drew one of his pistols and discharged it at the animal's head; but his aim was hastily taken, and the ball striking the alligator between the eyes, glanced off as if it had been cased in mail.

The creature continued to advance, with his formidable jaws distended, and brandishing his tail, and Glindon saw that if his next shot failed, both Inez and himself would be exposed to great danger.

'Fly, Donna Inez!' he exclaimed, turning towards her for a moment, and while the Spanish maiden ran to place herself at a safer distance from her ugly assailant, Glindon sprang aside and fired his second pistol at the alligator's abdomen, where the animal is less impervious to shot or steel.

The ball entered the creature's side, just behind and below his left fore leg,

and maddened by the pain, it turned furiously upon its assailant.

Glindon now drew his sword, and actively keeping away from the reptile's powerful jaws, he struck it on the inner and under side of its left hind leg, and inflicted a severe wound. The alligator now uttered a hoarse, half-stifled roar, brandished its tail more quickly, and rolled its eyes under the joint influence of pain and rage.

Donna Inez stood at a distance, with clasped hands and pale cheeks, trembling at the thought of the peril from which she had been rescued, and which now menaced her preserver.

Glindon evaded the alligator's furious onset, and again wounded it with his sword, and at length the huge reptile grew faint from the loss of blood, and abandoning a conflict which it could not maintain with advantage, it retreated instinctively towards the water, leaving a trail marked with its life blood upon the muddy margin; but before its haunt its strength failed, and the mail-encased creature fell upon its side, rolled over upon its back, and there expired.

Wiping his ensanguined sword upon the seedy grass, and returning it to the scabbard, Captain Glindon hastened to the spot where Donna Inez was awaiting the termination of his battle with the reptile enemy from which he had preserved her, and taking her hand, expressed the pleasure which he experienced at beholding her again, and being the means of saving her life.

The color returned to the maiden's cheeks as she poured forth her thanks for the service which he had rendered her, and Glindon thought he saw in her lustrous eyes, upon her glowing cheeks, and in the tones of her musical voice, a feeling stronger and deeper than that of gratitude or the pleasure of meeting with an old friend.

She leaned upon his arm as they walked towards her father's mansion, Glindon leading his horse by the bridle, and telling her as they went on of the promotion he had obtained in the army of his Catholic Majesty, and of the treasure which he had discovered in the ruined palace.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONFESSION OF LOVE.

By the worthy Don Jose, the young soldier of fortune was received as an old

and esteemed friend would be and when Inez acquainted her father with the fact that she owed her life to the heroism of Captain Glindon, he expressed his sense of the service in the warmest terms.—He insisted upon the young Englishman passing a few days with them, and they sat up to a later hour than usual that night, listening to Glindon's recital of his adventures since leaving them.—When they inquired concerning his brother, he informed them that he had learned on the preceding day that his brother was living in the valley of the Mississippi, in a very secluded spot, which accounted, he said, for not having been able to find him.

On the following evening, Captain Glindon and Donna Inez were walking in the garden just as the sun was sinking to rest upon the broad bosom of the far-off Pacific, and the western horizon was tinted by his fading beams with gold and crimson, the latter deepening into purple, which again blended with the dark blue of the cloudless sky. The westward walls of the mansion were tinged with a roseate glow, and the tall cypresses and maple trees cast a lengthened shadow upon the verdant lawns. From a little distance came the sweetly solemn sounds of some church or convent bell, tolling for vespers, and for a moment the voices of a group of peasants passing near the mansion, were heard singing the evening hymn to the Virgin—the touching Ave Maria.

'Ave Maria! blessed be the hour!

The time, the clime, the spot, where I so oft

Have felt that moment in its fullest power,

Sink o'er the earth so beautiful and soft,

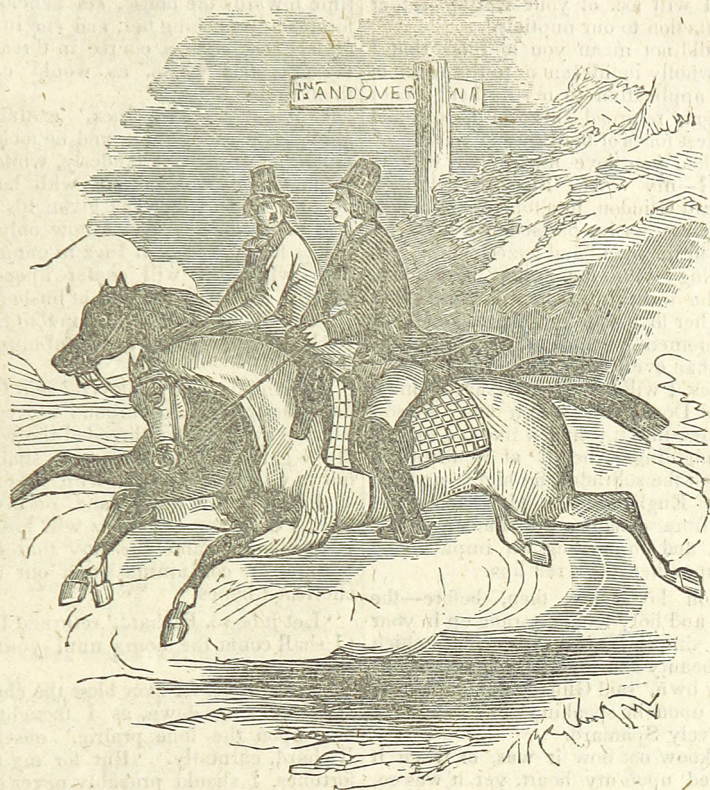
While swung the deep bell in the distant tower,

Or the faint dying day-hymn stole aloft,

And not a breath crept through the rosy air,

And yet the forest leaves seemed stirred with prayer."

Probably the feelings of Richard Glindon were similar to those of the noble poet—probably the natural beauty of the scene, and the combination of sweet sounds which accompanied it, caused a purer and holier feeling to sink into his heart than he had experienced for many years. But the vesper-bell, and the Ave Maria, were to him only part of the harmonious accompaniments of the scene, and the kind of influence which they exercised over him, was akin to that which would have been exercised by the choral melody of the lark faintly heard, as it soars far up, or by the murmuring of summer insects and tinkle of sheep bells in the distance.—Upon Donna Inez they exercised a dif-



THE HIGHWAYMEN.

ferent influence, the result of a widely different education and former tenor of life, and she breathed a silent prayer in the depths of her heart, as the sound of the vesper-bell was borne to her ears by the evening breeze, doubting not that it would rise to the Throne of Grace.

'Donna Inez,' said Richard Glindon, at the end of a pause in their conversation, which had been prolonged until it had become embarrassing, 'I cannot let this opportunity escape me of making a revelation, which has trembled upon my lips a dozen times since the hour when I awoke from seeming death into a new life, to which your kind attentions had called me. Your beauty, and the music of your voice, made a deep impression upon my heart, and the amiability of your manners rendered it ineffaceable. But I was a man of broken fortunes, and a heretic to the Church of Rome, and though your father's hospitality and your kind attentions have been greater than I can ever express adequately my gratitude for, the

happiness of possessing you was a boon which I dared not hope for. Now I wear the uniform of Spain, and have retrieved my fortunes, and I have returned to your father's house with the fond hope burning in my breast of one day calling you my own. Say, my adored Inez, can you reciprocate the passion with which you have inspired me?—will you be mine?'—

'You may ask my father, Senor Glindon,' returned Inez, in a low, soft voice, and without raising her eyes from the ground; but the rich glow upon her brunette cheeks conveyed to the young officer a more satisfactory response than that which her lips uttered.

'I would not take this hand from your father, Donna Inez, unless your heart accompanied it, though the wealth of both Indies were your dowry!' exclaimed Glindon, taking the maiden's small white hand in his own, and speaking in a tone of deep earnestness. 'Let me hear from your own lips that your heart reciprocates the holy and tender

feeling which animates my own, and then I will ask of your worthy father his sanction to our nuptials.'

'I did not mean you to infer that I was wholly indifferent as to the result of your application to my father, Señor Glindon,' returned Inez, in the soft and sweetest tones of her musical voice.

'Then you love me?—you will be mine?—my own Inez?' exclaimed Richard Glindon, in a tone of enthusiastic rapture, as he pressed the maiden's hand in his own, and gazed, with eyes beaming with the holiest tenderness, and the most impassioned admiration, upon her lovely countenance, which, at that moment, seemed to him more beautiful than ever.

'Yes, I will be thine, Richard,' murmured Donna Inez, in a tone, so soft and low, that it sounded like the song of the nightingale heard at a distance, through the solitude and night; and the young Englishman could no longer refrain from clasping the maiden in his arms, and imprinting an impassioned kiss upon her moist red lips.

'You loved me, then, before—the sweet and holy feeling sprang up in your heart simultaneously with that which your beauty and amiability excited within my own,' said Glindon, gazing rapturously upon the speaking countenance of the lovely Spaniard.

'I know not how it was, or when it dawned upon my heart, yet it was so, Richard,' returned Donna Inez, raising her blushing countenance, and love-radiant eyes to those of Richard Glindon.

'Then I have your permission to ask this dear hand of your father to-morrow?' said Glindon.

'And he will not refuse you,' returned Inez, answering his question with a look, brimful of tenderness. 'He speaks of you at all times in the warmest terms, and to the preserver of his daughter's life I am sure he will refuse nothing which may conduce to the daughter's happiness.'

Richard raised his lips to the small white hand which he had continued to hold, and kissed it with respectful tenderness; and in such conversation as is interesting only to lovers, they walked towards the house.

On the following morning Inez was walking alone in the garden, but she knew that Richard Glindon and her father were engaged in earnest conversation, and her heart divined its purport.

As she glanced for the third or fourth time towards the house, she beheld the former approaching her, and she immediately took such a course in threading the gravelled walks, as would cause them to meet.

'Joy, joy, dear Inez,' exclaimed Richard, as they met, and he took her hand and pressed it tenderly, while his countenance was radiant with happiness. 'Your father has given his consent to our union, and it now only remains for my beloved Inez to name the day, when she will confer upon her adoring Richard the name of husband.'

'Oh, 'tis so soon to ask me to fix it, Richard,' returned the beautiful blushing Inez.

'Listen, then, my beloved,' said Glindon, passing his arm around her waist, as, side by side, they threaded the walks of the garden. 'To-morrow I shall set out to visit my brother, with whom I shall pass a few days; and, on my return, I trust my own Inez will hesitate no longer to name the day that shall witness the consummation of our most cherished hopes.'

'Let it be so, Richard,' returned Inez. 'I shall count the hours until your return.'

'And I shall for ever bless the chance which laid me down, as I thought, to die, upon the lone prairie,' observed Richard, earnestly. 'But for my misfortunes, I should probably never have known thee, my Inez, and therein do I recognise the wisdom of that philosophy which from evil educes good.'

They had now returned to the house, where they were met by Don Jose, who imprinted a kiss upon his daughter's forehead, accompanying it with a blessing, and then the happy trio sat down to breakfast.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TWIN BROTHERS.

WITH what different feelings did Richard Glindon cross the frontier of the Spanish dominions in America, to those which possessed him when he crossed it a few months before! Then he was impelled onward by keen necessity and by a terrible restlessness, which forbade him to linger where he beheld that peace which was not in his own heart; looking upon himself as the victim of a dire fatality, and possessed alternately by the

gnawings of remorse, and the bitterness of a nature, disposed by sufferings and hardships to quarrel with the world, by fleeting, and yet perfectly sincere aspirations after virtue, and the despair of a mind which saw no means of extrication from the slough in which it had sunk. Now that despair was turned into hope, those aspirations now promised to be realised, that bitterness of mind had departed with its cause, and those touches of remorse, that were unavailing, had become merged in resolutions of amendment, that promised to be permanent. Peace had dawned upon his heart, happiness had returned, and instead of looking backward with regret, and forward with despair, he drew a veil over the past, and fixed his mental vision steadily upon the path of rectitude, which he proposed to pursue in future.

At length he beheld before him the lone farm-house in the green valley of the Mississippi, which he had first burglariously entered, and then fled from so precipitately, and his heart beat quickly, as he rode through the fields which intervened between the cart-track—called a road in courtesy—across the prairie and the garden which surrounded the farm-house.

The family, consisting of an old and a young couple, who have already been described, were sitting down to dinner, when they heard the sounds of a horse's feet approaching the house, and the young farmer went out to see who the traveller might be. He was surprised to see an officer in the uniform of Spain dismount from his horse, and tie the animal to the gate, and still more at the remarkable resemblance which he traced in the features of the officer to those of a brother whom he had left in England.

'Edwin,' exclaimed the epauletted officer; 'do you not recognise me?'

'Richard!' cried the young farmer, in a tone of the most unfeigned surprise. 'Is it possible that I see you in America, and in the garb of a Spanish officer?'

'It is not only possible but certain, my dear brother,' returned the officer, whom we shall henceforth call by his proper name of Richard Clinton, that of Glin-don having only been assumed, lest Don Jose should have been acquainted with the former.

'Is it possible that I hear the voice of your brother, Edwin?'" said the old man, rousing to the door with surprise legibly expressed in his good-humored countenance.

'Master Owen,' said Richard, 'I am

rejoiced to see you looking so well, and I trust that the climate of America has agreed equally well with Mrs. Owen and your daughter.'

'They are both well, my lad,' returned Old Owen. 'But this is a surprise! Why, I say, mother, here's Edwin's brother, and as smart as a new pin—all gold lace and feathers, I declare!'

'Come in, Richard,' said his brother. 'You are just in time for dinner, and Fanny and her mother will be delighted to see you.'

'And I'll put the horse in the stable, and give him a feed of corn,' said Owen, as he trudged off to the stable with Richard's horse, while the brothers entered the farm-house together.

Neither Mrs. Owen nor her lovely daughter, now the bride of Edwin Clinton, had ever seen Richard before, but they had heard the cry of old Owen, and even without such an introduction they could not have failed to recognise him, so complete and striking was his resemblance to Edwin, both in height and features. Richard bowed with respectful politeness as he entered the neatly furnished sitting-room, but for a moment he seemed struggling to repress emotions which he wished not to display.

'Then the story of the twin brothers was not a cunningly devised fiction after all!' says the reader. Certainly not; but have patience, kind reader, and all that has seemed mysterious in connection with the brothers, shall be satisfactorily elucidated.

'You are doubtless more surprised to see me in this garb than to see me here,' said Richard Clinton, with a faint smile.

'I have scarce had time to think about it, Richard,' said his brother, 'but I am unfeignedly glad to see you, because your appearance here holds out a hope that the views with which you once turned your thoughts to this side of the Atlantic have been realized. Sit down, and after dinner we shall have time to talk. How long have you been in America, and are you really in the Spanish service?'

'Aye, tell us your adventures,' said Old Owen, returning from the stable.

'You wrong me by the doubt implied in your second question, Edwin,' returned Richard Clinton. 'I am a captain in the thirty-second infantry regiment of his Catholic majesty, and I have been in America several months.'

'Did you remain at Cheam until

your departure from this country ?' inquired Edwin.

'I did,' replied Richard, with marked emphasis. 'Circumstances occurred, however, which made me fear the discovery of our secret, and I determined to leave England. After a variety of adventures hardships and vicissitudes, I found myself in Mexico, and I came to the resolution of entering the Spanish army, as a volunteer. I did so; the regiment which I had joined was then marching to suppress a revolt, which expedition was successful. The colonel and two majors were killed in the conflict, however, which led to many promotions and appointments, among which I obtained the rank of captain.'

'How came you to find us out ?' inquired Fanny.

'Did it never strike you that I had been near the house ?' said Richard, answering his sister-in-law's question by another.

'Was it really you who inscribed those initials on the tree near the gate ?' inquired Edwin.

'Did that question never occur to you until this moment ?' returned Richard, smiling.

'At least a hundred times, Richard,' replied his brother, 'but how could I imagine that it really was you who had visited the spot for the mere purpose of carving your name on the tree, and then going off across the frontier without seeing us ?'

Richard Clinton rested his forehead upon his hand for a moment, as if to steady his thoughts, and then he removed his hand, and replied—

'I came here in the dead of night, weary and famine stricken, but I could not bear the thought of disturbing your peaceful slumbers to relieve the wants of one who, whatever his sufferings were, deserved them. I cannot express half what I felt in my long, restless, fatiguing, and almost purposeless journey from New York to the Spanish frontier. I felt like Cain—or like the 'Wandering Jew.' I was balancing between evil and goodness, and at war alike with myself and with society. I was flying from society into the forests and the mountains, because I thought I had much to blame it for, but I could not fly from myself. I was heedless of where I went—reckless as to what happened to me. One morning I was found lying upon the prairie, upon which I had sunk down, from exhaustion, famine, and fatigue, by a Spanish gentleman and his

daughter, who live some forty miles beyond the frontiers. They thought me dead, but I recovered, and became their guest; a wound, received in assisting to repulse an attack of Indians, again laid me upon a sick bed, and prolonged my stay with my preservers. I had leisure to reflect, and also to fall in love, and reflection and love combined to work a great change in my mind. The rest I have told you, with the exception that when I return to the house of my Mexican friends, I hope to have the happiness of leading to the hymenial altar my preserver's daughter.'

'I congratulate you, Richard, both on the change which it has pleased God to work in you, and on the happy circumstances you have just mentioned,' observed Edwin, with deep earnestness.

'Allow me to add my felicitations to Edwin's, and to hope that we shall soon have the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Richard Clinton among us,' said Fanny.

'But have you no adventures to relate ?' inquired Owen.

'No news from the old country ?' added the old lady.

'Excuse me, my friends,' said Richard. 'I could not relate all that has occurred to me without paining both myself and my auditors. But you shall hear of a battle which I had with an alligator, only a few days ago.'

He then related the incident of the rescue of Donna Inez from the alligator, and the death of the animal; and afterwards acquainted them with the discovery which he had made, of the long hidden treasures of the old Caziques, among the ruins of their palaces and temples in the dark forest.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ADVENTURES.

WE cannot better than in this place relate the adventures and vicissitudes which befel our hero from the moment of his escape from the officers of justice, in West street, or Chick-lane, as it was then called, on the memorable night, the incidents of which are recorded, until the time when we find him a wandering vagabond in the broad valley of the Mississippi; though it was not until some time after his reunion with his brother, that he was able to summon sufficient resolution to relate them to him, when he did so in nearly the following words.

I know that you will believe me when I assert that, when the solemn compact was entered into between us by which I took your place at the Willows, I was perfectly sincere in the resolutions which I then expressed. For some time after your departure my resolution for amendment continued strong within me, and my anxiety concerning Rose, and my endeavors to find out the place of her retreat, with which I have already acquainted you, engaged my mind, and saved me from relapsing into vicious courses.

But at length I felt restless, my farming pursuits grew monotonous and distasteful to me, and I felt the absence of the excitement of my former mode of life, to a degree that became absolutely painful. The old craving for sensual pleasures returned upon me with greater force for the temporary restraint which I had placed upon my passions, just as the force with which the arrow is impelled is proportioned to the degree to which the bow is bent; and one evening I rode to London to visit a female with whom I had formerly been connected. I found her the mistress of another—of one who had been my most intimate associate, and burning with disappointment and jealous rage, I rode down to Croydon, where I remained drinking at a low public-house until a late hour.

I there met a strolling dancing girl, whom I had seen before, and to whom I casually mentioned my place of abode; and this produced a visit from one of my former associates, a young man whose father was wealthy, and who was more vicious than positively criminal. I was now thrown again into the vortex of dissipation, and it was not long before the blood-hounds of justice were on my trail. Twice I escaped from their hands when they deemed me within their grasp, but the danger that I was in compelled me to adopt some decisive measure for my safety. I dared not return to the Willows, and, after skulking about some days in various disguises, I took a passage on board a vessel about to sail for New York, in a feigned name, and by that means got clear of my native country in safety.

On my arrival at New York, I squandered the remainder of the money which I had brought with me in dissipation and profligacy, for I had only been actuated in leaving England by a desire to evade the doom which there awaited me, and all my former promises and resolutions of amendment were for-

gotten and scattered to the winds. But I have never rendered myself amenable to the laws in this country, and I took care to pass in New York by a different name to that in which I had taken passage from London, in order that that clue, at least, should not lead to my detection, after flying so far to evade the penalty of my misdeeds. The gaming-table for a time afforded me a precarious and uncertain resource, but, unscrupulous as I was in the measures which I adopted to ensure success, the hour at length arrived when I found myself a penniless vagrant upon the streets of New York.

‘Why I did not commit a new crime to replenish my exhausted purse, I cannot say; but I did not. I rambled about the streets, and when I met any of the sharpers with whom I was wont to associate, I thought that they shunned me. I entered a tavern in the evening where several of them were assembled, but not one of them asked me to drink. I saw that my reverses had caused me to lose caste with them, and I felt vexed and annoyed. I left the tavern, and again strolled along the Broadway with gloomy looks, my vexation and annoyance began to subside into a feeling of discontent with myself and society, I accursed my destiny, I quarreled with society, I looked upon myself as one whom circumstances and men had alike combined to make me their victim. I excited myself with these vain complaints, and the chill air of night which fanned my cheek and brow, failed to abate the fever in my veins. I walked about the streets until past midnight, and then I crept into an unfinished building, and laid down in a corner to sleep.

‘When I awoke the sun was reddening the house-tops, and I felt hungry; I took off my waistcoat, and sold it for a trifle, and when I had breakfasted, I buttoned my coat over my breast, and coiled myself up on the bench of a public-house in the suburbs. I resumed the thread, while pretending to sleep, of my self-communings of the preceding night, and as I did so, a doubt stole involuntarily into my mind, whether my discontent with the world was grounded upon a just and rational basis. I asked myself whether opportunities had not been presented to me, through which I might have attained reputation, competence, and happiness, and if I had not neglected to avail myself of them when I might have done so. Conscience answered these interpellations in the affirmative;

and as my belief in fate became shaken, a feeling of uneasiness became added to my discontent. That mental re-action was then commencing, the results of which have been so salutary. From the moment that I began to doubt whether I was not less a victim, and more a criminal, than I had formerly considered myself, I was uneasy and restless, and felt a desire for solitude and quiet. At other times the restlessness of my nature had led me to seek the unhealthy excitement of vicious society, but it was not so then, though I cannot say why it was not.

'I could not rest, and yet I wished to be alone. I left the tavern, and wandered about the streets; it would not do, I was possessed by an excitement which I could not control. 'Peace, peace!' I groaned, but it came not; and remorse and discontent began to influence me by turns. At length I felt an irresistible impulse to leave the city; I should feel more at ease, I thought, among the green fields and quiet villages around. I reached the country, but peace was not there; it is sought in vain by those who have it not in their own hearts. I went onward—onward, like the dove of Noah, seeking rest, but finding it not, and resolving to fly from my kind, into the green forests, where only the fox and the jaguar had been before me, and lay down by the flowering margin of rivers, where the only sign of man would be the blue smoke of the red man's camp fire curling above the venerable trees afar off, and where the silence of the wilderness would only be disturbed by the warbling of the blue-bird, and the distant ring of the woodman's axe.

'It was all in vain! I could fly from society, but I could not fly from myself; and within my own heart was the unsleeping and undying voice which will be heard. What availed the solitude of the wide prairie, when conscience was crying aloud, and would not be stilled? Still I went onward, begging my way through the southern states, impelled by a terrible restlessness, and possessed alternately by remorse and bitterness, penitence and despair. I looked backward with remorse and regret, forward with horror and despair. I cannot relate half that I felt—half that I suffered! As I have told you before, I was heedless of where I went—utterly reckless as to what happened to me. It was only by degrees that my mind at length passed through this terrible phase. Its fever had reached its height between the night

on which I carved my name upon the tree near the gate, and that on which I sank down in a state of utter exhaustion beyond the Mexican frontier. The leisure for reflection, which my physical prostration afforded me beneath the roof of the hospitable Spaniard, was serviceable to me, by enabling me to fix my thoughts steadily upon the future, and to examine my heart, free from the restless excitement that had goaded me over the prairies of the Ohio and the Mississippi. Still it was not in a moment that my mind assumed a healthy state, and I should have quitted the house of Don Jose, without any reformation having advanced beyond those fleeting but perfectly sincere aspirations after virtue, which had often shed their transient radiance over my path before, but for the wound which again prostrated me upon a sick bed. I had conceived a warm attachment for Donna Inez, but a deep sense of my unworthiness to become the husband of one so pure and good, urged me to fly from her presence without declaring it. Blessed be the arrow that stretched me again upon my bed, and by increasing my love for the warm-hearted Spanish maiden to a degree that was unsubduable, strengthened me in my resolutions of amendment, that I might become worthy of her affection.'

CHAPTER XXV.

ELUCIDATIONS.

THE intelligent reader may, perhaps, have anticipated us in some of the explanations which we are about to give, but it is necessary that they should be given for the satisfaction of those who are not among the cognoscenti in such matters, and in order that no doubt or misapprehension of any kind may exist in the minds of any.

The tale told to Ernest Montgomery as given in the nineteenth chapter, was substantially correct, but the narrator was not Edwin Clinton, as he represented himself to be, but Richard Clinton, the reprobate, and highway robber, whose feats had obtained him the name of the Black Mask; for instead of the latter having left the country as we supposed, it was Edwin who had done so. The Wiltshire robberies having obtained him an unenviable notoriety, and led to a degree of anxiety to effect his capture which foreboded unpleasant results,

Richard Clinton had shifted the scene of action to the hills and heaths of Surrey, where he knew that, if captured, he could contrive to evade the consequences, by representing himself as his brother. His confidence in the success of this ruse was increased by the arrest of Edwin Clinton's close relationship to the Black Mask, and to place Richard in a position in which he would be removed from the temptations of the metropolis, and from the chance of encountering his vicious associates, while his mind would be occupied by the details of an honest and peaceful occupation, that he should remain at the Willows, and that Edwin should emigrate to America. Richard would thus be enabled to redeem his character, while the fact of his being supposed to be Edward Clinton would preserve him from the chance of detection and punishment for his past misdeeds. He remained at the Willows, and Edwin, having married Fanny Owen, in London, emigrated to America, his wife and her parents accompanying him.

After his escape from the officers of justice, in West street, or Chich lane as it was then called, Richard Clinton resolved to quit the country; and after skulking about for some days in various disguises, he took a passage on board a vessel about to sail for New York, in a feigned name, and by that means got clear of his native country in safety. Arrived in New York, he squandered the remains of his ill-gotten money in dissipation and profligacy, and then that reaction commenced, the final results of which were so salutary. His state of mind during his subsequent wanderings and vicissitudes has already been described, and their remains nothing to add on his head but the assurance that his final change of mind was permanent and complete.

After passing a few days with his brother in the broad and verdant valley of the Mississippi, he returned to the country of his adoption, and shortly afterwards celebrated his nuptials with the beautiful and amiable Inez. The young couple continued to reside beneath the same roof with the worthy Don Jose, who, before he departed this life, had the pleasure of seeing the sons and daughters of Inez and her husband springing up around him, like suckers around the old tree, whose top age had denuded of its foliage.

Edwin Clinton and his beloved Fanny reared a numerous progeny in the farm-

house, which formed such a pleasing and peaceful retreat from the cares of the world, and in the reclamation of Richard, and the sunshine which illuminated the path of Rose, they found additional sources of happiness, which is ever increased in proportion to its diffusion among those around us. Many years have now elapsed since they were borne to that 'bourne from whence no traveller returns,' whither Fanny's parents had preceded them, but they yet live in the countenances and characters and likewise in the memories, of their sons and daughters. Clinton is still a respected name in the broad valley of the Mississippi, and more than one distinguished officer of that name may be found in the army of Mexico, the descendants of Richard Clinton having declared for independence and a republic, as soon as the banner of revolt was raised and the struggle had commenced, which ended in the separation of the Spanish colonies in America from the mother country.

We dare say our readers, and particularly the fair portion of them, are very anxious to know how the course of love ran with Rose Clinton and her lover, after their meeting on the old bridge at Notre Dame, at Paris, as related.

The reader will remember that we left Rose Clinton in the arms of her lover, who had just seized her as she was about taking a plunge into the dark current of the Seine, and thereby adding another to the thousands of hapless victims whose last breath has escaped in bubbles upon the surface of that famous river.

For some moments both Rose and Ernest were so overpowered with emotion that their long overtaken hearts scarce pulsated; but a gush of tears at length came to the poor girl's relief and she wept and sobbed upon the manly breast of her lover, like a grieved child upon its mother's bosom. Ernest seeing that their emotion was beginning to attract the notice of the passers by, induced a kind lad to procure a coach, into which he lifted the still weak form of his darling Rose. He took her immediately to a hotel in a retired street, where in a day or two, she so far recovered as to be able to accompany Ernest in short rambles to the most famous spots in the beautiful environs of the greatest city upon earth. One day as they were strolling along the Boulevards, admiring the magnificent edifices, which it has ever been the distinguishing traits of the French monarchs and nobles to

erect, in order to embellish the city which they regard with so much pride, Ernest was struck with the scrutinizing glances with which they were regarded by a man, whom he had no recollection of having ever seen before. At first he took but little heed of this circumstance, but when he observed that the man, after having passed them at a brisk pace, returned round, and retraced his steps, so that he met them face to face, he could not avoid calling his fair companions attention to the circumstance. No sooner had Rose's eyes lighted on the man's countenance than a perceptible tremor ran through her frame, and her lover felt her heart throb violently against his arm. Before he could ask an explanation of the cause of Rose's emotion, the individual, whose presence had produced such an unaccountable effect, had vanished from sight down one of those narrow dark lanes which were so plentiful in Paris at the time of our story.

'Rose, dear, have you ever met that man before, and where, and under what dreadful circumstances that the mere sight of him has driven every trace of color from your cheeks, and left even your lips as white as death?'

After a few involuntary shudders, Rose informed Ernest that she had somewhere seen that face, but where, she in vain endeavored to recollect, although she rapidly recalled the long train of thrilling incidents through which she had recently passed. The thought of her forcible abduction by the poacher and his dissolute companion, but their brutal countenances had nothing in common with the features of the man they had just met. She recalled the events that had transpired after she had reached the house allotted as her prison, by the elder Montgomery, but the tenant of that desolate house was a totally different looking person from the individual that had so fearfully alarmed her. The coarse, but not ill-natured faces of the smugglers who had carried her to France, were very dissimilar to the marked, but rather refined expression of the unknown features. Rose was just telling Ernest that she had in vain tried to recall to mind under what circumstances she had met with this man, when he suddenly overtook them, and placing his hand firmly on Rosa's shoulder, exclaimed, 'Secure the wretch. It is she; I cannot be mistaken.' At the same instant Ernest was seized by two gendarmes, his elbows pinioned, and both he and Rose were thrust into

separate coaches, and driven rapidly away in different directions. Ernest in vain attempted to glean any information from the two gendarmes who occupied the interior of the vehicle, with him. They were silent as though they had been mere marble effigies.

After a drive of about half an hour Rose, who had fallen back insensible upon the cushions of the coach, was borne carefully, by the rude but not cruel men who had arrested her, under the heavy archway of a lofty embattled edifice, whose black shadows appeared to bury the neighboring houses in gloom. Heavy doors creaked and grated upon their ponderous hinges, and flew shut with a loud clang that roused sonorous echoes which reverberated through the long vaulted passages that led in almost every direction to the numerous dungeons below the level of the ditch, which surrounded the outside wall. These rude clamors, however, were insufficient to arouse poor Rose from the death like trance which appeared to have frozen the vital current in its course. She was borne into a chamber, where the attention of two females and the prescriptions of the attending medical men, at length brought back the symptoms of life to her wearied frame and troubled brain. From her attendants she learned that she was a prisoner in the Bastille, that castle of cruelty, where

'Hope seldom came, that comes to all.' But for what offence she had been incarcerated, or what had become of Ernest Montgomery she could not learn.

Leaving the captive girl slumbering from the effects of an opiate administered to lull her into temporary forgetfulness of her dreadful situation, we will return to Ernest who was hurried to one of the Parisian prisons in which ordinary malefactors were confined before their trial. His examination before the procureur-du-roi explained the cause of his and Rose's arrest, the man at whose instigation they had been taken prisoners was the steward of the Marquis St. Croix, and had seen Rose in his master's apartment on the evening preceding the night which had consigned the seducer to a bloody end and fiery tomb amid the ruins of his ancestral chateau. Thus terminating in infamy a long and glorious time, which had been ennobled by the achievements of many famous statesmen and warriors, who had shed lustre for many genera-

tions upon the history of their country. Gaspard, the steward of St. Croix, had never been fully satisfied that the fire which consumed the chateau was the result of accident, and the unaccountable absence of any relics in the ruins of the fair damsel whom he had seen in his master's room, made him half surmise that she was in some way connected with the fatal catastrophe that had deprived him of an indulgent master, from whose improvidence he was reaping a rich harvest of wealth. When Gaspard, therefore, so suddenly and unexpectedly met Rose, as already detailed, what was before mere vague surmise became absolute certainty. For how had she managed to escape when the Marquis perished, unless the whole affair had been premeditated, and she had been assisted by accomplices in destroying the Marquis and firing the chateau. He immediately acquainted an officer of gend'armes with his suspicions. A couple of hackney coaches were procured, a guard of armed police detailed, and the supposed criminal and her accomplice hurried off to prison as has been already narrated. The reason that Rose was taken to the Bastille, was this. St. Croix had been employed in some delicate but important negociation between one of the royal princes and the marchioness des B——. Gaspard was aware of this circumstance, and thought it not improbable that the injured husband, who was not one of the convenient creatures so plentiful about the court of France at that day had plotted the introduction of Rose to St. Croix, subsequent to his death, in order to become possessed of some written evidence of the guilt of his wife. Full of these probable but mistaken ideas, he had acquainted the officer with enough of his suspicions to induce him to send Rose to the Bastille, where the higher officers of state might make such inquiry into the mysterious affair as they deemed necessary. The officer of course, comforting himself with the idea that he would not go unrewarded for his zeal and intelligence.

The magistrate before whom Ernest was brought instituted a close and searching examination, but he could elucidate nothing that went to show any complicity on his part in the murder of St. Croix, although the probability that he might have been an accessory after the crime had been committed, seemed sufficiently strong to warrant his detention. In vain

did Ernest protest his entire innocence of anything even resembling guilt in the mysterious affair, and as to Rose being an incendiary and a murderess, he not only scouted the idea, but vehemently urged upon the magistrate the necessity of immediately releasing him, that he might fly to the prison in which Rose was confined, and effect her liberation. But, although Ernest used all the eloquence of truth, he failed to move the official dignity in his favor any further than to allow him the privilege of addressing a letter to the English Ambassador. Fortunately for Ernest his surname of Montgomery had an effect upon the envoy of his country that a less patrician one might have failed in producing, and in a few days he was set at liberty, but without being able to obtain the slightest clue as to the whereabouts of his unfortunate betrothed. That she was in prison he knew, and probably in a Parisian prison, but in which of the many goals that abounded in the city he had not the slightest clue to guide him to. A chance acquaintance with a *mouchard*, a professional spy, whom he had encountered, was the means of at length placing him on the right scent. This man promised, in consideration of a handsome gratuity being paid him, to discover where the English maiden was confined. He accordingly proceeded methodically to work, by ingratiating himself with one or other of the door-keepers of the various prisons, to worm out of them descriptions of the different persons who had been lately entrusted to their custody. At length he informed Ernest that if Rose was imprisoned anywhere it must be within the walls of the Bastille, but that his means and address were insufficient to obtain any information of the individuals lodged beneath its terrible roof. By diligent research Ernest at length met with the coachman who had driven the vehicle containing Rose to the gates of the Bastille, and thus his gloomiest forebodings were changed into still gloomier certainties. The authorities of the Bastille, he knew, were far above being influenced by any bribe he had the power to pay, and he now began to despair of ever again clasping the dear girl to his heart, whose image seemed to wax more lovely the more obstacles were thrown in the way of the consummation of the most cherished wish of his soul, that he might make Rose Clinton his wedded wife.

Ernest procured humble lodgings in a

small cabaret nearly opposite the draw-bridge, which formed the only path to the Bastille.

Although he might with quite as much likelihood of ever seeing Rose, have lived at the antipodes.

Here he would sit, hour after hour, gazing intently upon every figure that entered or left the prison. But though he saw many enter, he saw but few leave, and of these none bore the least resemblance to the form of the unfortunate girl whose sad fate he so incessantly deplored, and whose sufferings he would so willingly have shared.

Meanwhile, his health began to be seriously impaired, and at the urgent persuasion of the poor people in whose house he lodged, he was induced to take some short rambles in the vicinity, to overcome, if possible, the injurious effects of grief and confinement. But he would only grant himself this needful indulgence on condition that the keeper of the cabaret, or his wife, kept vigilant watch during his brief absence, and if the portals of the Bastille opened to give freedom to a female, the watcher was to follow her, and acquaint her with the whereabouts of Ernest.

One evening while Montgomery was straying sadly through one of the dark lanes that were then very numerous in the neighborhood of the prison-fortress, that lifted its black front like a colossal curse towards heaven, he was roused from his reverie by the wild shrieks of a female. At any time, or under any circumstances, he would have flown to the assistance of a woman in distress, but now that his thoughts were brooding over the misfortunes of Rose, he felt doubly impelled to rush to the rescue of any of her sex who might need his aid. Accordingly he ran rapidly towards the spot whence the sounds proceeded, and found a slight young girl resisting, with all her feeble strength, the efforts of a powerful ruffian to drag her into a loathsome looking doorway, which gave entrance to one of the filthiest houses in that squalid quarter. One blow from Montgomery's clenched fist sent the ruffian reeling into the dark entry and down a flight of steps that led to the cellar. Without staying to see whether the scoundrel had any life in his heartless carcass, Ernest obeyed the terrified girl's entreaties to hasten from the dark and dangerous neighborhood, before some of the baffled wretches accomplices in crime could fall upon them.

As soon as Ernest and his companion

had reached a more open and frequented street, he slackened his pace, and had an opportunity to examine, by the light of one of the few lamps that were suspended from a chain that hung across the street, the form and features of the poor maiden, who clung to him almost convulsively. He had not gazed long on her pale cheeks, ere he became convinced that he had seen her frequently before, and after an instant's reflection, he remembered that he had seen her almost daily visiting the Bastille with a basket of flowers on her arm. Lisette, for so she was named, readily informed him, in answer to his eager interrogations, who she was, and what was her employment. She lived with an uncle, a florist, who furnished the noblesse with festoons and bouquets, with which to decorate their saloons on festive occasions, and to offer at the altar of their patron saint on their *fete* days. The wife of the *Sieur de Lianville*, the Governor of the Bastille, was passionately fond of flowers, and as the restricted limits of the prison afforded no space for the cultivation of flowers, Lisette was employed by her uncle to take daily to Madame rich bouquets of cut flowers for her boudoir and saloon. The fragrance of the odorous blossoms, fresh from the bosom of earth and spangled with dewdrops, perhaps served to banish the unwholesome and unpleasant airs which pervaded the giant fortress.

While Ernest was conducting home the fair flower-girl of the Bastille, he in return for her confidential relation of her circumstances, related to her all that had befallen Rose and himself, and expressed his belief that the former person was imprisoned in the Bastille. Lisette thought it very likely, and not only offered to ascertain the fact, but, also, to convey any message from Ernest to her, should she succeed in seeing her. As Lisette was a great favorite of Madame de Lianville she had little doubt of being able to see Rose if she was in the prison, which she would have discovered long before if she had possessed any motive to urge her curiosity.

On the following day, Lisette called upon Ernest. Her generous heart was full of gratitude, and she felt anxious to testify the strength of her feelings, by some act of kindness to the man who had preserved her from an outrage worse than death.

Ernest gave her a brief letter for Rose. In which he acquainted her with the fact of his living in the vicinity, and of his resolution to attempt any thing however

hopeless or desperate which presented the slightest chance of rescuing her.

Lisette concealed the letter in her bosom, took up her flowers, and tripping lightly to the drawbridge, was soon admitted by the guardian of the gates, who had a general order from his superior to allow the flower-girl to enter without question whenever she presented herself, provided her visit was between sunrise and sunset, and that she was alone. On that day no favorable circumstance occurred by which Lisette could learn any thing respecting Rose. On the following day, however, it happened that Lisette and her uncle were both ordered to be at the Bastille at an early hour in order to decorate the chapel altar with flowers. — While engaged in this employment the chaplain entered accompanied by a lady, whose English accent, as she conversed with the priest, told Lisette that the maid she sought was beside her. Rose approached the altar around the richly carved golden sacramental vessels, which Lisette was wreathing with the fragrant flowers of the jessamine. "Ernest," murmured the flower-girl in a low tone. A burning flush of the deepest carnation reddened the snowy neck and cheek of the English girl as she heard that dearly loved name. Lisette was satisfied, and under the pretext of offering Rose a bunch of flowers, managed to slip the letter of Ernest into her trembling hand.

Rose immediately withdrew for the purpose of feasting her eyes on the writing of her dear Ernest. The reader may be surprised at the facility with which Rose, a prisoner, in this the most secure of prisons, roamed about, the seeming mystery is readily explained. — Madame de Lianvill the lady of the Governor, had spent many years in England, and gladly sought the companionship of Rose to relieve the many tedious hours of her monotonous life. She easily obtained her husband's permission that the English girl might be removed from the cell she had at first been placed in, to a more commodious and less gloomy chamber in the suite of apartments more particularly reserved for her own use. — This request the governor was more willing to grant, as his wife was continually pressing him to resign his office as guardian of the state prison for some less lucrative but more pleasant position, and he was ready to do any thing to reconcile her to her gloomy abode.

Rose had no sooner read the letter of Richard, than she hastily penned an answer, in which she detailed every circum-

stance that had taken place since their forcible separation. This note she found means to slip into the hands of the flower-girl, who thrusting it into her bosom, quietly continued her floral task, without by word or glance, betraying the least interest in the appearance and disappearance of Rose.

Montgomery impatiently awaited the return of Marie from the Bastille, and most joyfully received and eagerly perused the letter she brought from his unhappy mistress. Rose informed him that the relations of St. Croix, were fully convinced that she was his murderess, and some party closely connected with the Royal family was equally sure that Rose had attained possession of papers containing some secret of vast importance to him. The relations of the murdered marquis were clamorous for her blood from revengeful motives, and the member of the Royal family was equally importunate that she should "sleep the sleep that knows no waking." These two influences, working conjointly to the same end, were sufficient at that time in France to insure the death of a far more powerful person than a poor friendless strange maiden. In fact she had only escaped death that long owing to the deep interest taken in her by the noble minded wife of the Governor, who used all her influence to obtain a temporary respite, being fully satisfied of her entire innocence of all the charges preferred against her.

Whenever an opportunity presented itself Lisette conveyed letters between the cruelly parted lovers, but for some time nothing occurred that gave either Ernest or Rose the faintest hope of being able to accomplish the liberation of the latter.

Among the attendants upon Madame de Lianvill, was a girl named Annette Leclair, she had attended her mistress for many years, and although her health had been declining for some time, no persuasions could induce her to leave her mistress, to whom she was strongly attached, and seek for health amid the health-giving breezes of the country. — Her illness took the shape of a rapid decline about the time that Rose was immured in the Bastille, and the latter took great interest in her, frequently setting up with her during the long nights when she tossed restlessly upon her pallet, and providing cooling drinks to assuage the fiery thirst which at times parched the lips and throat of the poor invalid. So fondly did Annette become attached to the English maiden that whenever an ac-

cess of fever disturbed her brain she would refuse all nourishment unless it was tendered by the hand of Rose.

Despite the constant attention and unwearied kindness of Rose, day after day Annette grew thinner and thinner, till her once full form was wasted to a mere shadow of her former self. On the night previous to her death, a faint carnation flush, as of returning health, lightened up her sallow cheeks, and an unusual brightness sparkled in her dim eyes. Those that sat beside her, thought these were indications that a favorable turn had taken place in her disease, and that she might still recover. They told her of their hopes. But she sadly shook her head. She felt that these flattering tokens were but like the transient glow that suffuses the heavens ere the sun sinks below the horizon: the crimson color that paints the leaf when the frost has arrested the flow of the genial sap, and it is about to be torn from its parent stem, and whirled to the earth by the rude autumnal blast. Poor Annette felt too surely that her hours were numbered, and desiring the presence of the Priest attached to the Bastile, prepared to unburthen her bosom of the few venial transgressions that alone weighed upon her young heart.

After a brief interview with her confessor, Annette sent for Rose, and desired to be left alone with her. When all the rest had retired, the dying girl said, in tones faint but full of pathos, "My dear lady, I have called you to my bedside to thank you for your goodness to a poor girl, and to reward you in the only manner in my power."

"Talk not of rewards, my poor dear girl," said Rose. "If I have been of any service to you, I have been amply rewarded by witnessing the gentle patience with which you have borne the long days and nights of anguish which it has pleased the good God, doubtless, for some wise purpose, to visit you with, and I only wish it had been in my power to have lightened your sufferings, by bearing part of them myself."

"Oh, well do I believe you, my kind lady and now I wish you to give me one more proof of your love. Give me your solemn promise that you will faithfully perform my last request, which I will make known to you as soon as you give me your assurance that upon no pretext will you deviate from it."

Rose had little hesitation in pledging herself to carry out to the letter, the desire of the now fast failing girl.

Annette beckoned Rose to bend her head close to her. Her lips slowly moved and in a low whisper she communicated her secret wish. Rose started and would fain have refused Annette's request, but when she saw by the expression of the dying girl's face, that her refusal would add another pang to her death struggle, she signified her intention to obey Annette's dying injunctions. A faint smile for an instant brightened the paling features of the consumptive, and motioning Rose to hand her a small crucifix which stood on a table beside the bed, she pressed the emblem of salvation to her thin lips, and with her eyes turned heavenwards, gave one heavy sigh, and Rose was alone with a lifeless body. Summoning assistance, Rose retired to her chamber, and at least for that evening, forgot her own misfortunes in bewailing the death of Annette, to whom she had become strongly attached. Rose communicated to Ernest by means of the flower-girl, the proposition of the dying Annette, and Ernest hastily made all the necessary preparations for carrying them into effect.

The night had come when Rose must carry her fearful plan of escape into execution, or forever bid hope farewell, and resign herself to a life-long captivity—Timid, like most of her sex on trivial occasions, her spirits mounted with the magnitude of the danger, and this slight girl who would have shrunk from killing a sparrow, calmly prepared to do what would have palsied many a strong man's heart to think of. The huge bell of the Bastile had just dismally tolled midnight, and its dull vibration was still mingling with the deep muttering of a heavy thunder-clap, when a gentle tap at her door apprised her, that now or never she must win her freedom. Her suspense was brief, for, noiselessly opening her heavy door, she admitted the devoted flower-girl, whose pale cheek and bright eye told of the strong struggle between natural fear and invincible resolution. Rose clasped the hand of Lisette, and together they silently walked through the long corridor, dimly lighted by faint rays from an iron cresset that swung from the vaulted roof. After one or two turnings they arrived at a door, which Lisette slowly entered, accompanied by Rose. Both of the girls involuntarily paused, and, the French maiden breathed faintly but fervently, a prayer for the repose of the dead girl, whose form lay in a coffin covered with a heavy black velvet pall that fell in cumbrous folds upon

the floor. Two tall wax tapers burned either side the coffin, diffusing through the apartment a rich aromatic perfume, and seeming to offer up their incense to a large elaborately carved crucifix, that stood at the coffin's head. Two young girls, who had been the fellow servants of the deceased, were kneeling at the foot of the corpse, and their heavy sobs told how deeply they mourned for their departed friend. As soon as they became aware of the presence of Lisette and Rose, they moved, still on their knees, to the head of the coffin, lifted the pall, removed the lid and imprinted a last kiss on the cold lips which but a few days before had been dimpled with smiles, or opened to give utterance to some pleasant *bon mot*. After replacing the lid and the pall, they slowly left the apartment, and Rose and Lisette were left alone in the awful company of the dead. Both instinctively dropped to their knees, and prayed for protection in the solemn, and what now seemed, almost sacrilegious, act they were about to engage in. The clock striking one, recalled them to the necessity of prompt action, and they removed the pall and lid, and, after conquering an involuntary shudder that crept over them as they first touched the rigid limbs of the marble form, lifted the body from its narrow receptacle. Between them they bore it, as carefully and tenderly as a mother would her new-born babe—wetting its pale shroud with tears the while—and softly laid it on a couch, imprinted each a fervent kiss upon its cheek, and then reverently covered it with the sombre pall; but in such a manner as would not excite thoughts of what reposed beneath its ample folds. A few moments after, and the place just tenanted by the corpse was occupied by Rose, whose pale cheeks and ashy lips looked to the terrified flower-girl as if she was about to become in reality, what she was counterfeiting. Lisette, however, soon regained her presence of mind, and after making all the necessary arrangements for screwing down the cover of the coffin, drew a chair beside it, and with one hand locked in that of Rose, they passed the dismal hours till the faint light of early dawn, reminded them that they might momentarily look for the arrival of the persons who were to carry away the body. Scarce had the affrighted Lisette turned the last screw into its place, when the approach of heavy footsteps announced the arrival of the bearers. The coffin was lifted upon a low bier, and accompanied by the

flower-girl, was taken to the gates of the Bastille. The flower-girl tendered to the officer on duty, the order for the removal of the body of Annette Leclair, and without hesitation the command to open the gates and lower the drawbridge was given.

If Rose's heart leaped with joy as she felt them bear her over the bridge, what pen can describe her emotions of gladness as she felt herself lifted into a coach, and heard Ernest in eager words, and a voice tremulous with hope and fear, ask briefly if his dear Rose was safe. Ere he could be answered the coach door was fastened and the horses started. With the strength of a giant Ernest wrenched the lid from the coffin, and convulsively clasped to his heart, the fainting form of his betrothed.

As soon as the coach had reached a very lonesome part of the Bois de Boulogne, the uncle of Lisette, under the pretext that he had dropped a purse well filled with gold, persuaded the driver to return back on foot, to search for it. No sooner had a turning in the road hid him from a sight of the vehicle than Lisette and her father with Montgomery and Rose left the coach and struck into one of the labyrinthine alleys, that abounded in that part of the forest. They left a handful of gold in the driver's seat, which he found when he returned, and discovered that of all the load which he had left in his coach, there only remained an empty coffin. All the rest had vanished. The quick and the dead had alike taken flight. Hackney coachmen are not famous for their piety, but this one could not refrain from uttering a few paternosters strangely mingled with *sacre bleux* as he deposited the empty coffin by the side of the road, gently fingered the coins to feel that they retained no warmth from their recent contact with the fingers of the diable, and quickly trotted off to Paris, a wiser if not a better man than he was when he left it.

The old gardener, wisely judging that if pursuit was made it would be in the direction which the carriage was seen to take, when it drove from the Bastille, determined to return to Paris through an opposite gate, and take refuge for a few days, with an old and attached friend on whose truth he knew he could rely.—They were successful in reaching the residence of this man, who readily afforded them shelter and concealment, until such time as they could succeed in obtaining passports that would enable them to reach the sea coast, and from thence contrive to escape for England.

To remain long in Paris with safety was clearly impossible even if it had been desirable, and neither Ernest or Rose had passed such a pleasant time in France as to induce them to desire to prolong their stay. Lisette and her uncle who had both compromised themselves by lending their assistance to facilitate Rose's escape were, of course, liable to punishment, and they readily accepted Ernest's offer that they should accompany the lovers in their flight to England.

In a few days passports were procured by which they were enabled safely to reach a small fishing hamlet on the sea coast, not far from Calais, and within sight of the white cliffs of their native land. To leave Calais without proper passports was entirely out of the question, as *gens d'armes* were stationed on the quays, and closely scrutinized all persons who attempted to leave France. Ernest dared not offer any of the fishermen a sum of money to induce them to carry his party across the channel, lest they might acquaint the government officials with the fact and thus lead to their arrest and imprisonment, yet to remain was exceedingly hazardous, for the presence of strangers in a humble fishing village at such a season had an extremely suspicious appearance.

One evening as Ernest and Rose were straying along the beach, gazing with wishful eyes in the direction of their home they observed a party of men, evidently attached to the revenue service, pass to and fro between the shore and a small shallop, which they appeared to be furnishing with provisions and other necessities for a cruise. A fine breeze was blowing fresh off the land, and suggested to Ernest the idea of embarking in the shallop and running across the channel in her. He instantly ran to the cottage in which they had been living, and acquainted Annette and her uncle with his determination. They left the cottage without leave-taking of their unsuspicious host. Arriving at the beach, it was but an instant's work to launch the little boat which the sailors had left fastened to a large stone, and row her to the shallop, which danced upon the now moon-lit waves at a little distance. Upon reaching her side Rose and Annette were helped in, and quickly followed by Ernest and his companion.

A few hearty pulls and the little anchor was in board. The jib was quickly hoisted, and the small craft began to creep slowly out of the haven guided by the hand of Rose, who moved the tiller

obedient to the order of Ernest, who was no novice in nautical matters. Mean while the two men hoisted the mainsail, and as it bellied to the breeze the sharp cutwater of the shallop, swiftly divided the waves on either side, leaving a long wake of snowy foam to mark for a few minutes the course of their bark, and then to be obliterated forever.

An hour passed, they had cleared the two points which formed the entrance of the small harbor they had just left, and Ernest as he looked towards the English coast seeing nothing to obstruct his view, began to congratulate Rose on the happy escape and to plan out the course she should pursue on their arrival at Dover. Their anticipations were suddenly interrupted. A bright flash glared over the waters. A loud booming sound smote their ears, and turning their eyes landward in the direction of the sound, they saw a large white cloud of smoke driven before the wind, and the next instant as it dissipated into air, the unwelcome sight met their astonished eyes, of a large schooner, carrying a crowd of canvass, bearing down towards them with what seemed the sweep of an eagle. For a moment hope forsook Ernest. But it was for a moment only. Giving the tiller once more into Rose's hand, he sprang forward and casting off the fastenings hoisted the foresail. The little craft nearly doubled her speed, and for a short time it seemed that she was beginning fairly to run away from the large vessel, that was evidently in pursuit of them. — But their joy was of short duration, for as Ernest watched the manoeuvres of the schooner with eager eyes and a beating heart, he saw a large square foresail set, which greatly accelerated her sailing, and it was evident that she was once more fast gaining upon them.

Lescaur, the uncle of Lisette, who had been placed in the bow to keep a lookout, sang out that a large black rock, on which the waves were furiously dashing, was but a little way ahead of them, and Ernest was forced to change the direction of this shallop in order to avoid driving headlong on this new peril. — This brought their shallop broadside to the wind, and when the sheets were hauled in, the little craft careened fearfully to the fast freshening breeze.

The shallop's change of course was quickly discovered on board the schooner, but her direction was not so readily changed. Her vast foresail had to be lowered, and stowed away before she was hauled on a wind, and even then it was

evident she had more sail set than she could safely bear. But in the excitement of the chase prudent seamanship was forgotten, and not a stitch of canvas was taken in except the square foresail.

Ernest felt that further flight was useless. His own little vessel, though a fine sea boat and a swift sailer, could no longer contend with the much larger and well manned craft that was rapidly advancing in his wake. He had just determined to lower his sails in token of submission, and for that purpose had cast off the halyards of both fore and mainsail, and to facilitate the lowering of these sails he had ordered Rose to run the shallop's prow right into the wind's eye. Fortunately was it for all in that little vessel that the order was understood and promptly obeyed.

The pursued had been so engaged in watching the pursuers and the pursuers in watching the pursued, that neither had observed the clouds which were fast overspreading the heavens. Suddenly a black cloud covered the moon and threw a veil of darkness over the waves, which were now running almost mountains high. The darkness continued but a moment, yet during its continuance, a fierce blast swept past the little shallop, tearing its jib from the bolt-rope as easily as if it had been formed of tissue paper. All eyes in the little craft turned involuntarily towards the schooner.

Scarcely a minute had passed since they saw her skimming like a sea-bird over the leaping waves, and now she lay a total wreck, her masts and every vestige of rigging swept clean away, now rising on the crest of a wave, then sinking heavily into the trough of the sea, while at times a billow, larger than its fellows, would sweep her decks from bowsprit to taffrail. It was truly a pitiful sight, to see that vessel, so lately riding as if in triumph over the waves, and now to see her struggling and dipping, completely at their mercy.

The squall was as brief as it was violent. The clouds rapidly dispersed, flecking the blue heavens with their fleecy spots, and the waves fell almost as soon as they had risen, leaving a long swell to follow them.

The joy of the little party on board the shallop at their almost miraculous escape was greatly dampened by the dreadful fate which they feared had befallen all hands on board the schooner. Although there was but slight chance that any had escaped from the terrible destruction which had so suddenly stricken them,

Ernest and his companions determined to sail toward the wreck, and tender assistance, if any living being still remained upon deck. In a few tacks, they approached sufficiently near the schooner to perceive that at least one person had escaped with life, and after considerable trouble and no little danger, Ernest succeeded in making his little shallop fast to a rope which floated to leeward of the wreck. He hauled close alongside, and mounting her side, found a couple of men lashed to the bulwarks. They had sustained some serious but not fatal injuries, by the falling of the rigging. A little attention soon restored them to vitality and recollection. Ernest was not a little surprised to find them Englishmen, and they no less at discovering their rescuer to be a countryman. In answer to Ernest's questions, they stated that they had been engaged in smuggling, and that their boat had been captured by the French schooner, on the previous afternoon, and they made prisoners. To punish them for their obstinacy in not having shortened sail when first hailed by the Frenchman, the consequential skipper had ordered them to be lashed to the bulwarks, and to this they owed the fact of their preservation when the officers and crew had been swept from the deck to a man. The smuggler also informed Ernest that the schooner was just entering the port of Calais on her return from a cruise, when a message was transmitted to her, by means of those unsightly telegraphs which have now given way before the magnetic wires, to the effect that a boat had been taken from a neighboring fishing village, and ordering her to sail instantly in pursuit. The result of the chase has already been seen by the reader.

Having taken the two smugglers on board their shallop, Ernest once more set sail for England, and the reinforcement the little crew had received by the accession of the two smugglers, enabled him to manage the little craft with great ease, as both the men were not only strong and able seamen, but excellent pilots, being practically acquainted with all the tides, currents, shoals and harbors of the adjacent shores of both France and England.

Meanwhile the night had passed away and the matin stars were slowly fading before the more brilliant light of the sun which was just purpling and gilding the orient with his cheering rays. Rose and Lisette retired to a little cuddy, and

sought repose after the fatigues and horrors of the night, while Ernest and Lescaur, wrapping themselves in the warm boat cloaks which they found on board, stretched themselves on the deck to sleep, confiding the shallop to the care of the smugglers.

It was an evil moment for the ill-fated adventurers when they thus reposed confidence in the men they had rescued from death.

No sooner had Ernest and Lescaur sunk into a sound sleep, than the evil one seems to have suggested to one of the smugglers the likelihood that Ernest and Rose were some important state prisoners, and that if they could only manage to restore them to the French authorities, they would doubtless be generously rewarded. The fellow had little difficulty in obtaining the full consent of his comrade to his infamous scheme.

It was scarce the work of a moment to lash the helm, and then throw themselves upon Ernest and Gaspard, who, wrapped in the heavy folds of their cloaks, and buried in the profoundest sleep, were secured before they could make any successful resistance. The inmates of the cuddy meanwhile slept on, happily unconscious that the prow of the shallop was once more laid towards the land that groaned beneath the ponderous walls of the Bastille.

The moment the shallop entered the port of Calais, a large boat came alongside, and upon the commander hearing the story told by the smugglers, in which they largely magnified the skill and bravery they had displayed in the capture of Ernest and Lescaur, a guard of soldiers were placed on board, and the whole party, including the smugglers, landed on the quay. After a brief examination, they were committed to prison, to await the result of the communications which were promptly forwarded to the government at Paris.

In a few days orders arrived for them to be sent to Paris, and they were accordingly sent in diligences, accompanied by armed guards.

Nothing of any interest occurred during their route, until they arrived at a small village, some few leagues from the French capital.

They had stopped to dine and to change horses, and the prisoners were placed in the office of the Maire of the hamlet for security.

While Ernest, Rose, Lescaur and Lisette were partaking of the coarse fare

set before them, a crowd of curious villagers gathered around the door, to look at the unusual sight. A few persons, bolder than the rest, had entered the office, and among them was a man who had evidently seen Rose before, for the instant his eye rested upon her countenance, he changed color, and was evidently much moved. His agitation, however, was not perceived by the bystanders who were too busily engaged in watching the strangers to have any eyes for the actions of an ordinary peasant, for such the man's attire bespoke him to be. He quickly recovered his presence of mind, however, and after taking one more long and scrutinizing glance of Rose's countenance, he lazily strolled out of the room, and engaged in conversation with the soldiers who formed the escort of the prisoners. Their parley ended by the peasant inviting them to a cabaret that stood opposite, to drink a glass of wine. The soldiers readily agreed to accompany him, and leaving the prisoners in charge of the Maire and a number of spectators, who readily volunteered to stand guard. They gaily marched over the way, taking their muskets with them, which they neatly stacked in the entry of the inn, before they walked into the parlor. Just as they entered the cabaret, the peasant who had given them the invitation to drink, exchanged a meaning glance with a dull-looking, ill-clad fellow, who was leaning against one of the door-posts. No sooner did the clink of glasses and bursts of riotous mirth tell that the party within was busily engaged in drinking, than the fellow noiselessly approached the muskets, and after glancing sharply round, to see that he was unobserved, rapidly and silently drew the wadding from each musket, and turning them butt up, the bullets rolled into his hand. After carefully replacing the muskets, the fellow looked into the room where the soldiers were drinking, gave an expressive sign to their inviter, and then slowly turned on his heel and left the village by a byelane that ran nearly parallel with the high road. He had not long departed, ere the sergeant called upon his men to fall in, marched them across the road, took charge of his prisoners, and many minutes had not elapsed ere the whole party, prisoners and soldiers, were rolling slowly along the road to Paris.

As the shades of evening began to close in, they were with difficulty surmounting a high hill, whose lofty summit was covered by a heavy forest.—

They had not proceeded more than half a mile into its gloomy shades before the horses' heads were seized, and a loud voice threatened instant death to the first man that attempted resistance. For an instant the sergeant and his party appeared confused, but quickly regaining command of their senses, they aimed their muskets at the men who held the horses by the reins. But a loud laugh told them that the attacking party were unharmed. With a loud curse the sergeant threw aside his discharged weapon, grasped his sword hilt, but before he could draw his sword, a violent blow across the knuckles rendered his hand powerless, and in another minute the soldiers and the drivers were tied to trees, the prisoners released, and in a kind tone bade to accompany the men who had rescued them. This they readily agreed to do, and accordingly struck into a tortuous path thickly shaded by the branches of a dense growth of young firs.

It was near midnight before their guides stopped, either for rest or refreshment, and when they did so, Ernest found that they had passed through a deep valley and ascended to a lofty mountain right opposite the one where their rescue had taken place.

It was with extreme difficulty that Rose and Lisette had managed to climb the rugged path which led up the rocky face of the hill, but by the assistance of Ernest and Lescaur, and the occasional aid of some of the band who had attacked the diligence, they at length found themselves upon a small level platform of rocks that seemed to hang almost perpendicular over the paths they had just scaled with so much difficulty.

The lurid flames from some resinous torches attracted the attention of Ernest to the entrance of a vast cavern, into which they were kindly invited by the peasant, who had been so much struck by the appearance of Rose in the office of the Maire, and who had afterwards invited the soldiers to drink. He appeared the leader of the band, all the members of which paid implicit obedience to his orders.

After advancing some twenty feet from the entrance of the cabin, they found themselves in a natural hall of colossal size. The roof towered aloft in rude arches, which springing from rough pillars at the sides, and seen by the fitful and uncertain glare of the torches, it seemed rather a vast cathedral formed by the skill of man than by the caprice of nature.

The imaginations of Ernest and Rose were soon, however, brought back from their excursion into the ideal, by the rough but cordial invitation of the robber chief, for such their host appeared to be, to partake of their supper. It needed no second invitation, for the sharp night air of the mountain had given a keen edge to their appetite, and they made a hearty meal of the coarse but cleanly repast that was spread before them.

As one incident after the other of this eventful night rapidly succeeded each other, Ernest was unable to obtain an opportunity to question his host as to his motives and intentions with regard to himself and those that accompanied him, and after supper he was requested to retire to a portion of the cavern parted off into little rooms by green boughs from the forest, ingeniously interwoven so as to form a leafy and impervious screen between each apartment.

Rose and Lisette were lighted to one of these apartments, and in answer to her look of dread at being separated from Ernest, the peasant told her that her friend should occupy the next room, and as if to give them redoubled assurance, he offered both Ernest and Lescaur a brace of pistols, with powder and balls to load them.

Ernest, however, refused the proffered arms, telling the peasant that he confided not only his own life but what was far dearer to him, the honor of Rose, to the guardianship of the man who had shown so much disinterested friendship for them in rescuing her from the hands of their guard. What the motive of all this kindness could be Ernest trusted to be informed at as early an hour as pleased their benefactor.

Late on the following morning Ernest rose and found Lisette, her uncle, and Rose, with the peasant, all seated at a rude table awaiting his appearance. After they had partaken of the frugal meal, the peasant proceeded to explain to them the reason that had induced him to attempt their escape. He did so in nearly the following words.

Before I proceed to satisfy your very natural curiosity it will be necessary for me to give you a brief sketch of my humble life. I am the son of a small landholder, and having in my boyish days evinced more than the usual intelligence of lads of my class, an uncle, who was cure of a neighboring village, persuaded my parents to entrust me to his charge, and he would himself give me such an education as would fit me to enter the

church. I very readily gave my consent to a plan which promised me what I was violently fond of: leisure and opportunity to read. For some years I remained with my uncle, who was a worthy man, and if he had not the talents of a Richelieu he had what was far better, the piety of a Fenelon, and a kind, noble heart. He spent nearly all his little income in deeds of charity to his poor flock. The years which I spent beneath my uncle's lowly roof were among the happiest of my life. I made such good use of the instructions of my aged benefactor that at nineteen, I was sufficiently well educated to enter a Jesuit's College in a neighboring town. But I was not destined for a life of celibacy. I met and soon became deeply in love with a young girl, the daughter of a small farmer in our part of the country, and having married her, of course all my clerical aspirations were scattered to the winds. As we were both poor, I took up my abode with my wife's parents, and by our combined labor we were able to live a frugal but contented life. The measure of my happiness seemed full when Heaven sent us a little girl. But as if a curse accompanied every blessing, soon after the birth of our child my poor wife sickened and died. I should have been inconsolable at the loss of so good and affectionate a woman, had not my attention been demanded to care for our helpless little babe. For sixteen years my life passed tranquilly along. Every sabbath, when we attended church my daughter and myself visited the little mound in the church yard where lay the remains of my wife, and carefully pruned the little rose bushes that every autumn strewed it with a covering of white and red roseleaves.

As my daughter grew up, I carefully imparted to her all the learning of which I was master, and as she was an apt scholar, she speedily surpassed me in general information. Nor were her mental accomplishments her only attractions. She was surpassingly beautiful, and as I had with a foolish pride kept her from laboring at any of the field work in which so many poor country women find employment, she grew up as fair and delicate as if she had been city born and bred.

My acquaintance with writing and accounts recommended me to the notice of the seigneur of our village, and he gave me employment as under-steward and confided to my care the management of several farms. This afforded the marquis, for such he was, frequent opportunities to visit my cottage. Alas, fatal

blindness, that I could not then perceive his motive. What good intention could bring a hawk to the nest of the dove.

As I was often from home during these visits, he had the opportunity he desired of being alone with my daughter, and he did not fail to use all the specious arts of which he was master to win her affections. The rest is soon told. Failing in conquering her virtue by the usual arts of flattery, and finding that while she liked his brilliant conversation, and preferred his company to the untutored but honest peasantry of her acquaintance, she yet respectfully but firmly refused the rich presents he sought to bestow on her, he tried a plan that was too fatally successful.

During the absence of the Marquis in Paris, his steward procured my arrest on a charge of embezzlement, and as all the books were in his hands and I had never had my accounts properly audited, the charge was easily substantiated, and I was thrust into gaol. Conscious of my innocence I looked for a speedy discharge. Meantime my daughter was left homeless, and without a protector.

Upon the return of the Marquis my daughter immediately waited upon him, and besought him to obtain my release. He magnified the difficulties in the way of doing so, until the poor girl, sick at heart whenever she painted to herself the misery I was enduring while pining away in my solitary dungeon, purchased the liberation of her father by the sacrifice of her honor.

Months passed before I became aware of the circumstance to which I owed my freedom, and when the fatal secret could no longer be concealed from me, bitterly as I felt the degradation of my child, I could not but forgive her in consideration of the holy motive that had prompted her acquiescence to the wishes of her heartless betrayer.

But if I pardoned her, it was only with the solemn determination to wash out the dishonor of my girl in the heart's blood of the fiend who would make the love of a child for her father the means of her ruin. I kept my vow. Yonder lady knows how well. This knife was buried to the hilt in the heart of the Marquis of St. Croix.

A gleam of ferocious satisfaction shot from his piercing black eyes as he uttered the last words, and then Rose recognised, for the first time, the features of the man who had slain the Marquis, and saved her on the night that the chateau was given to the flames to satiate the revenge of an injured father.

After a few moments of painful silence the peasant resumed.

On my escape from the chateau after revenging myself on the destroyer of my child, I went to Paris, and found a number of persons who have for many years known of this cavern and used it for a retreat.

My superior education, address, or boldness, I know not which, induced them to make me their leader. From this place we sally forth and by a rude kind of justice deprive those who are overburthened with wealth of a portion of the excess, and as we never molest the little property of the peasantry, but on the contrary frequently assist them, they are careful not to give any information that would lead to the discovery of our retreat.—Some of our band make a practice of visiting the adjacent villages occasionally in order to learn the character and route of travellers, and it was for this purpose that I yesterday visited the hamlet where I saw this young lady, and recognized her as the maid whom the Marquis was about to outrage, and learned from the soldiers that she had been imprisoned in the Bastille on a charge of having murdered him.

I quickly formed the determination of liberating you, and one of my comrades, after drawing the charge out of the muskets of the soldiers, set off to this cavern to inform the band of my intentions. They accordingly met me in the forest, the rest you know, and now it only remains for you to inform me what I can do to assist in enabling you to escape to your country. The two smugglers, of whose treachery I was informed by the soldiers, have been soundly whipped by some of my band, and after being blindfolded have been led to a different part of the country, and there left, unable, if they are ever so willing to give any information as to our whereabouts.

Ernest could not help deeply sympathizing with the poor father, and was far from condemning the summary and sanguinary vengeance which he had taken upon the Marquis.

In answer to the inquiries of Rose, the peasant informed them that his daughter had joined the Sisters of Mercy and sought by deeds of active benevolence to expiate her almost unpardonable offence.

It was deemed advisable by the peasant that Ernest and his companions should remain for a few days concealed in the cavern, until the noise of their escape had died away, and all the measures to recapture them had failed.

Although Rose could now have proved her innocence of the crime of which she had been accused, yet as she could only do so by denouncing Jacques, the peasant robber, to the French authorities, both herself and Ernest determined they would prefer perpetual imprisonment, or even death itself, to such base ingratitude.

Many days had not elapsed before Jacques informed them that he had procured passports which would enable them once again to approach the sea coast in safety, and on the following night they were all to set out, on foot, guided by Jacques, with the intention of reaching the village at no great distance, where they could procure a diligence to take them to some port on the channel.

Ernest, also wrote to his father, stating that he was unable to leave France openly, for reasons with which he would acquaint him when they met. He begged his father to make instant arrangements with some of the numerous smugglers whose little vessels were continually crossing the channel, to put into the small harbor he designated, and take them on board. These letters Jacques entrusted to one of his band, to have placed in the post office of a neighboring town.

But they were not destined to escape so easily. One of the soldiers who had drank with Jacques, informed the *procureur du roi* that he could readily recognize him if he ever saw him again, and he had been kept secretly in the village.—Upon Jacques visiting it he immediately apprised the official, who lost no time in placing spies upon the movements of the robber, and tracked him to his cavern lair. A force of *gens d'armes* was procured, and quietly led near the cavern, where they were stationed in ambush with the intention of capturing the whole band at once.

It was the evening on which the party were to set out when one of the robber band rushed into the cavern pale and almost breathless. He had discovered one of the *gens d'armes* concealed behind a rock, and unperceived himself had hastened to apprise Jacques of the alarming fact.

Jacques though evidently taken by surprise did not for an instant display any fear, but put forth all that presence of mind which had doubtless been the cause of his ascendancy over the acts of his fellow robbers.

He instantly gave orders to his band to drag the branches that had served to form the cavern into apartments to the mouth of the cave. In a few moments a

strong barricade was offered to the entrance of any assailant.

Ernest regarded these preparations with fearful interest, and though he doubted not the courage of Jacques and his followers, he saw how futile must be any resistance. For even should the attacking party fail in entering the mouth of the cavern they had only to station themselves there, and in a few days at the farthest, starvation would compel a surrender.

He frankly told Jacques his thoughts, and advised him to endeavor to make his peace with the authorities by promptly surrendering himself and Rose. This well meant advice the robber rejected with a gesture of haughty disdain. But he told Ernest that he had foreseen the likelihood of such an event taking place, and had provided for it. Known only to himself was another outlet from the cavern, which was probably unguarded, and through this he proposed that Ernest and his friends should escape, while himself and his band gained time by delaying the entrance of the attacking party. This counsel, in his turn. Ernest promptly rejected, and stated his fixed determination to stand by those who had risked so much for him. To this the robber would not assent, and by picturing the brutal outrage that the females would probably be subjected to, should the soldiers force an entrance to the cavern, he at length induced Ernest to depart, promising to follow them as soon as he thought they had gained sufficient distance to put them out of the risk of capture.

A volley of bullets crackling amid the dry branches that formed the barricade, told them that they had not departed a moment too soon. A brief silence followed this discharge, and the next instant was heard the sharp ringing report of a solitary musket followed by a piercing shriek, the bullet of the robber had entered the breast of a victim. Ernest and his companions now made the best of their way along the path indicated by the guide to whose care they had been entrusted by Jacques.

They had not proceeded more than half a mile in their descent from the mountain when a flash as of the keenest lightning dazzled their eyes, and the next moment the earth on which they stood rocked as if upheaved by an earthquake.

The cause of this sudden convulsion was explained by the guide. Jacques had a considerable store of gun powder secreted near the mouth of the cavern, and it was likely that the soldiers, exasperated at the determined resistance they

had met with, had fired the branches which prevented their entrance to the cavern. Some coals had found their way to the magazine, and the explosion had doubtless hurled Jacques and his assailants into the air, to descend mutilated and disfigured corpses.

Ernest had little time, however, to mourn over the fate of the robber Jacques. Every exertion was needed to place himself and his party in safety upon his native soil. Fortunately upon their arrival at the village to which they had been directed by Jacques, they found the necessary passports, and a sufficiency of money to defray their expenses. They were thus enabled safely and unsuspected to traverse all the country that lay between them and the little harbor where Ernest had directed his father to order the smugglers to wait for his appearance, and to their great joy upon going down to the beach they saw a little craft from whose tapering topmast floated the blue pennant which he had requested should be hoisted to serve as a private guide.— That night Ernest, Rose, Lescaur, and his niece, Lisette, once more embarked for England, and at length Fortune seemed to have tired of persecuting them, for a fine stiff breeze drove them swiftly across the channel.

On their arrival at Dover, they were met on the quay by the parents of Ernest, who were so overjoyed at the safe return of their long lost son, that they readily gave their consent to the union of Rose and Ernest, who took up their abode at the cottage at Addington, of which mention has already been made. At this cottage Rose presented her husband with two children, a son and daughter, and here they continued to reside, until the death of the old folks, when they removed to the Coppice.

For Lescaur an excellent situation was obtained by Ernest, as head gardener upon the estate of a wealthy nobleman, whose broad acres soon exhibited numerous marks of the talent of the French gardener.

Lisette resided with her uncle in the elegant little cottage that was allotted for his residence, until her beauty, modesty and worth attracted the notice and regard of the worthy curate of the parish. In his endeavors to win her over from the errors of popery, he lost his heart, and the same day that saw her united with his church saw him united to her. A number of little black-eyed children, with long raven curls, that were often to be seen skillfully cultivating the little garden of the parsonage told that

the flower-girl of the Bastille had not omitted "olive branches" in her bouquet.

Frederick Hamilton, the lover of Ellen Lee, was compelled by her extravagance to try his luck upon the road, and accordingly one dark evening he gave directions at the stable where he left his horse to have him ready saddled by eleven o'clock. After giving Ellen a parting embrace he left, but before doing so he could not refrain from expressing his regret at the fact of Clinton's disappearance, as he had now no comrade to assist him in his hazardous enterprises.—Ellen appeared to pay no heed to his last remarks, and he departed to spend an hour or two at the tavern previous to setting out on his nocturnal adventure.

When Hamilton arrived at the stable, he found his horse, a powerful bay ready saddled and bridled, and after carefully examining the saddle-girth, the stirrup-straps, the reins, and the bit, to see that every thing was in perfect order, he leaped into the saddle, and giving his horse the rein, dashed into the dark street at a brisk trot.

Hamilton had hardly reached the street before a second equestrian, who was already mounted, but had kept concealed in the back part of the stable, followed him into the street, and touching the horse lightly with the spur, managed to keep him in sight.

In this way the two equestrians traveled for several miles. The noise made by Hamilton's steed prevented him from hearing the foot tramps of the horse that followed him.

In this way they passed like substance and shadow so accurately did the second rider time the pace of his horse to that of the one he followed.

In this manner they passed through the crowded precincts of Westminster whose fat deans draw a golden revenue by letting the buildings, bequeathed by the charity of by-gone generations, for houses of prostitution and gambling.—They passed swiftly by the grandest temple that man has ever erected to his God, the noble towers of which threw their shadows over streets, traversed by beggars more forlorn and wretched than even the starving Lazarus. They passed the stately palace of Whitehall, but without even lifting their eyes to the great window of the noble banqueting hall, through which the perjured monarch marched to the block, and melted the hearts of his bitterest enemies by the serene and manly fortitude with which he bowed his head to the stroke that ended a life of misery. Soon the hoofs of

their horses woke the echoes of the old Bridge that crossed the Thames. Then they trotted briskly through Southwark, and quickly emerged upon Blackheath. Here Hamilton drew rein, and looking back for the first time perceived the horseman that was on his track. His mind was soon made up apparently for he quickly turned and rode back toward the advancing horseman, who continued to draw near.

"A black night, friend," said Hamilton as he once more turned his horse, and rode side by side with the stranger.

"Very," was the terse reply in a low tone.

"Do you ride far to-night," said Hamilton.

"Very," was the brief response.

The singular replies, no less than the subdued and evidently disguised tone in which they were uttered excited Hamilton's attention, if not his fear. He accordingly cast a scrutinizing glance upon his taciturn companion. His investigation showed the stranger to be rather below the middle height. His features were concealed by a broad brimmed, slouched hat, which effectually hid his features from observation. He wore a riding coat, richly embroidered, as was the fashion of the times, which was closely buttoned over a full, round chest. The finely formed thighs were tightly covered by handsome buckskin breeches, and boots reaching fully to the knee displayed a small and elegantly shaped foot, but concealed the swelling leg that must have formed part of such a figure. Hamilton was surprised, he thought he never had seen so fine a figure, and his admiration was increased when he observed the easy grace with which the horse he rode was managed.

But the biting night wind which came moaning over the desolate heath, recalled the highwayman to his senses. He remembered that he had not taken a solitary ride or a lonely moor, at midnight, to admire the figure of a gentleman, or his fine horsemanship. But somehow he felt an unusual reluctance at breaking the silence by presenting his pistol to the head of his companion.

But if Hamilton hesitated, it was soon evident that his companion had no such scruples. For he suddenly saw a pistol placed with its muzzle against his breast and while the sharp click of its being cocked struck his ear, he heard the same muffled tones exclaim:

"Your money, or your life!"

Surprise for a second rendered the highwayman dumb. But the next in

stant he broke out into a loud fit of laughter, as he said:

"Lost your time, friend. You might as well seek money from yonder gibbett," and as he spoke he pointed to a bleached skeleton that swang in chains above their heads. His assailant turned in the direction he pointed, when quick as lightning Hamilton grasped the wrist of the hand that held the pistol, and giving it a powerful wrench the weapon fell to the ground.

What was Hamilton's surprise to hear a loud shriek proceed from his companion as he twisted his wrist, and at the same instant the slouched hat dropped to the ground, revealing to his astonished eyes, the lovely face of his *cher amie*, the dark-eyed Ellen Lee.

"Why what in h—ll sent you on this mad masquerading frolic," exclaimed Hamilton.

"Why I heard you regretting the loss of Dick Clinton, and as I had helped you to spend your money, I thought it but fair then I should help you to make it. So I ordered a horse to be saddled at your stable, and took the road just after you, intending to ride behind you until you were engaged in some job, and then if you needed it to give you all the assistance I could. But you observed me, and turned back. I was just about to make myself known to you, when seeing that you were about to rob me, I thought I would anticipate you, and give your courage a trial at the same time. But I have paid dearly for my joke, for you have nearly broken my arm," as she uttered the last words, she drew off her thick glove and displayed a fat little dimpled hand, which the gallant highwayman gently seized and conveyed to his lips.

"I tell thee what, my lovely wench," said Hamilton, "but for some thing that I can't explain, I would have had my pistol at your heart, but there was such an uncommon pretiness in the way your plump limbs clung to the saddle that for the life of me I couldn't make up my mind to attack you, and while I was in doubt how to act, your pistol at my breast called me to move quickly to save my own life. But now, Ellen, we must return to town, for I can't think of trying anything in my line while you are in my company."

"Fred, I came out to-night to join you, and join you I will. If there is no danger, why there's no harm done, and if there is danger you will find that I can draw a trigger with as sure an aim as any of your blustering sex that can't say

three words without two of them being G—d d—n."

"Well, Nelly, you're a wilful wench, and I suppose must have your way," replied the highwayman; who truth to tell was not a little flattered by the devotion Ellen had shown for him by starting out on such an adventure to aid him. So, first giving Ellen a smart slap on her tight fitting buckskins, he touched his horse with the spur, and they both dashed forward at a slashing pace.

They had proceeded a little over a mile, when they perceived a coach approaching towards them. Hamilton told Ellen to stay where she was, while he proceeded to stop the vehicle, adding that if she was determined to have a hand in the fun, she might come up if there was any fighting. But he did not think it probable that there would be any resistance offered.

Meeting the coach Hamilton called upon the coachman to stop or he would send a bullet through his head. The coachman evidently thought he had enough of lead in his cranium already for he drew up so abruptly as almost to throw the high spirited horses back upon their haunches.

But if the servant was alarmed his fears were not shared by his master, who trusting his head through the window demanded to know what d—d scoundrel dared to stop his coach on the King's highway, and before Hamilton could retort a well aimed bullet whizzed past the robber's ear.

Ellen the instant she heard the report of the pistol struck spurs into her steed, and in a few leaps her horse brought her to the door of the coach, just as its occupant had cocked and levelled his second pistol. He pulled the trigger; for a moment Ellen wavered in her saddle, and the next instant her horse was galloping riderless back to London.

Hamilton made no further attempt to stay the progress of the coach, but throwing himself from his horse lifted the body of poor Ellen from the wet earth, and gazed almost frantically into her fast whitening face. He tore open her coat, and well might the most courageous heart have sickened at the sight that met his eyes. Her fair full bosom, white as the young blossoms of the haw-thorn, was dabbled with blood which came oozing out from the wound made by the traveller's bullet.

Truly have the poet said that "none all evil." For as Hamilton gazed upon

the piteous spectacle, tears fairly rained from his eyes, and rolling down upon poor Ellen's bosom, mingled with the heart's blood of the frail but loving girl, who had lost her life for him.

The early dawn still found the highwayman on the heath, holding in his arms the lifeless body. The first travelers that came that way, a couple of rough cattle-drovers, alighted from their horses, and offered their aid to remove the body of Ellen to the nearest house. Hamilton thankfully accepted their kindly proffered aid, and between them they proceeded to convey her to an inn, which was situated on the edge of the heath. Hamilton after leaving all the money he had with him in care of the inn keeper, rode off before the astonished Boniface recovered his scattered senses sufficiently to enquire the meaning of the strange affair, and how it happened that a young woman should be attired in that unfeminine dress, and who had murdered her.

In the morning the news that a young woman, dressed in male attire, had been murdered on the heath, spread through the city, and reaching the ears of the traveller who had shot her, he attended at the inn, and gave a detailed account of his share in the transaction. Of course he was acquitted of all blame. All attempts to find Hamilton failed, for the reason that he instantly fled to the city, and finding a vessel in the Thames, getting under way for the new world, he took passage, giving the captain a magnificently jeweled watch in payment, and giving him a plausible account of his flight from Bailiffs, who had arrested him for a large debt which he was wholly unable to pay. Upon his arrival in America he entirely abandoned his previous disreputable life, and engaging in the service of an extensive fur company sought the excitement and danger that suited his ardent spirit, amid the forests of the far North-West, and his unquiet body at length found rest under a mound in the pathless woods.

Robert Artuard continued his career of dissipation, now completely penniless, and in a few days after rioting on money won from some unsophisticated youth, who had been attracted by his brilliant conversation, dashing appearance, and genial humor.

A couple of years thus rolled on till Robert's face became as familiar to the habits of every gaming house in London as that of the knave of clubs. Few cared for playing with a moneyless adventurer, who was a consummate adept at every game of chance, and who never

failed to aid fortune by a little trickery whenever an opportunity offered. Finding himself shunned at the green cloth, he gradually began to consort with lower sharpers, until drink and its attendant vices led him to the lowest depth of degradation, bloated his features, bleared his eyes and seared his conscience.

Artuard was now reduced to that hopeless state, which when a man reaches he is ready to listen to the fellest proposition, and perpetrate the blackest crimes. About this time he got into companionship with a reckless ruffianly burglar, known among his associates as Daring Dick. To this fellow he once happened to mention that his father was rolling in wealth, but he feared that he would never have a chance to spend it, as his father had made two wills. By the first, made some years before, he had devised all his property to his son Robert. More recently, however, he had made a second will, in which he had bequeathed the whole of his property to charitable purposes, rather than have it squandered by his prodigate son. The first will Artuard knew had been deposited with the title deeds of family estates in the iron box of the notary, the second the old gentleman retained by him, probably with the intention of destroying it, should Robert evince any tokens of amendment.

No sooner had Daring Dick heard this recital than his mind, quick to perceive where any advantage could be gained by himself, began to harp continually in Artuard's ear upon the cruelty of his being forced to live like a beggar, while his father was possessed of such large revenues. He also dwelt upon the lack of fatherly affection in a parent who could coolly determine, just as he was about to leave the world forever, to cast off his son without even a slight annuity to keep him from actual starvation. These devilish suggestions found Artuard's warped mind but too ready to receive favorably what followed, and he hardly started when Daring Dick proposed that the will dispossessing Robert should be destroyed, and the old man murdered at the same time, in order to prevent the possibility of his making another. This would leave Robert Artuard the sole heir both by will and by relationship.

This infernal plot found Robert as we have intimated, but too ready to enter into it.

The murderous attempt of the parricide was happily frustrated by the courage of the butler and some of the other domestics, and Artuard and Daring Dick were both captured, after a desperate

resistance. They were executed at Tyburn, and the property of old Artuard went to assist the charities of his native town.

Concerning the frail Emma, the information which we have been able to glean is more precise and satisfactory.— Soon after her amour with Richard Clinton was brought to an abrupt termination by his flight from the country, she became connected with an actor of some repute on the London boards, who, finding her a graceful dancer as well as a beautiful woman, obtained her an engagement in the ballet *corps* at Drury Lane Theatre.

She became a great favorite with several gay gentlemen who love flirtations behind the scenes, and for many years she lived gaily and luxuriously; but happening to meet with an accident in falling through a trap-door, negligent-

ly left open, by which she broke one of her thighs she became anticipated for her profession. After living in poverty and misery for a couple of years, during which she subsisted on the charity of those who had known her in the sunshine of her gay life, she became weary of her existence, and accordingly terminated it by poison.

We have now brought our narrative to a close, traced to their death-bed, or to the point at which we have lost all trace of them, the various characters who have figured therein with more or less prominence, and we must now drop the curtain, and bid farewell to those who have followed us to the end, trusting soon to appear before them again, and to be able to draw still closer the bonds which unite the author with the readers in an endless circle of sympathy and fraternity.

THE END.

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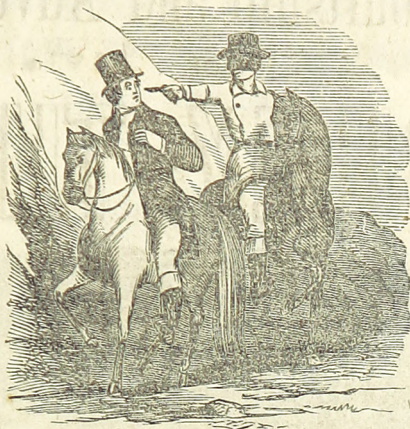
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
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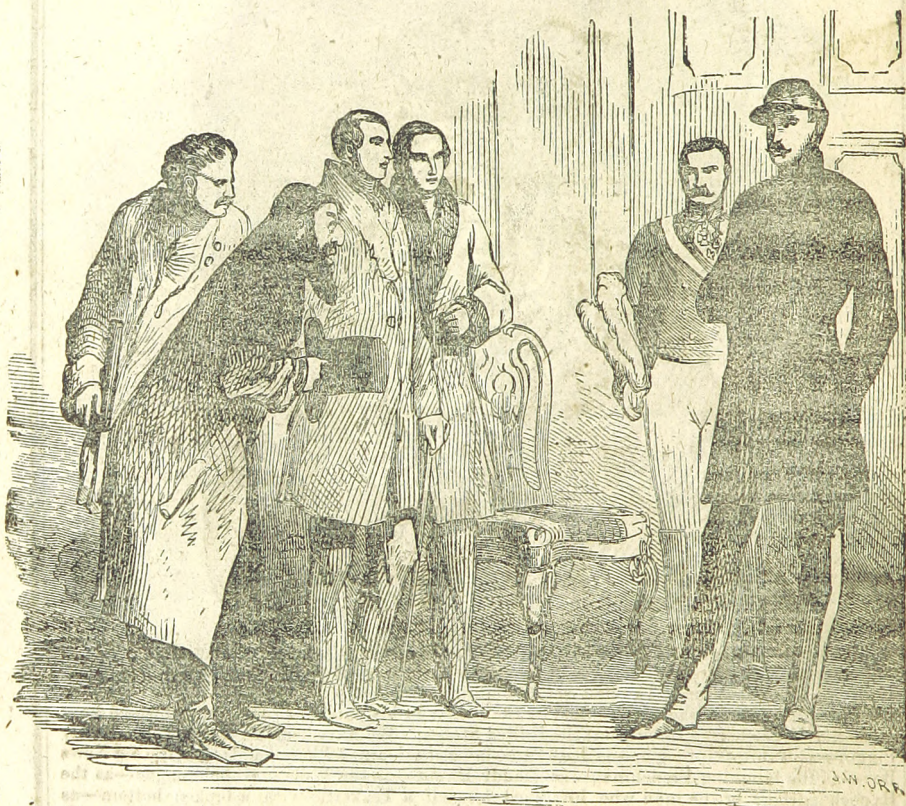
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